

PZ
3

.R545I

FT MEADE
GenColl

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 35 Copyright No.
Shelf PZ 3
R 515 I

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





THEY WERE IN THE CLUTCH OF THE BRIGANDS.—(P. 52.)

THE SEA AND SHORE SERIES—No. 13.

ISSUED MONTHLY. NOVEMBER, 1889.
SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, \$3.00 PER YEAR.

*Copyrighted, 1889, by Street & Smith.
Entered at the Post-Office, New York, as Second-Class Matter.*

THE
IRISH MONTE CRISTO ABROAD;

OR,

The Secrets of the Catacombs.

BY

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON, M. D.

AUTHOR OF

"GOLD-MAKER OF LISBON," "JOLETTE'S FATE," "WEDDED
TO WIN," "FROZEN HEARTS," "THE IRISH MONTE
CRISTO'S SEARCH," Etc.

NEW YORK:

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
31 Rose Street.



Pears' Soap

Fair white hands.
Bright clear complexion
Soft healthful skin.

PEARS' SOAP HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN LONDON 100 YEARS, both as a COMPLEXION and as a SHAVING SOAP, has obtained 15 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS, and is now sold in every city of the world. It is the *purest, cleanest, finest*, most elegant and economical, and therefore the best of all soaps for GENERAL TOILET PURPOSES; and for use in the NURSERY it is unequalled. PEARS' SOAP can now be had of nearly all Druggists, *but be sure that you get the genuine, as there are worthless imitations.*

PAINLESS BEECHAM'S EFFECTUAL THE GREAT ENGLISH MEDICINE PILLS WORTH A GUINEA A BOX

For Weak Stomach—Impaired Digestion—Disordered Liver.

SOLD BY ALL DRUGGISTS.

PRICE 25 CENTS PER BOX.

Prepared only by THOS. BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire, England.

B. F. ALLEN & CO., Sole Agents

FOR UNITED STATES, 365 & 367 CANAL ST., NEW YORK.

Who (if your druggist does not keep them) will mail Beecham's Pills on receipt of price—but *inquire first*. (Please mention this paper.)

THE IRISH MONTE CRISTO ABROAD.

CHAPTER I.

TRACKED TO PARIS.

"Welcome to Paris, Mr. O'Connor!"

"Oh! you know me?"

The quiet-looking French police official smiled slightly, and bowed his head.

O'Connor's male companion, Mr. Obed Grimes, the keenest old detective New York had ever produced, looked intensely interested, but said nothing.

"We make it our business to know every one who sets foot on the sacred soil of France."

"I knew that in the days of the Empire you were credited with having the finest police methods of any nation in all Europe."

"And if ever we needed it we do now, for German spies keep us constantly worried, tracing our fortifications and learning our weak points. From the minute you set foot in France you were shadowed, and your whole history learned."

"Impossible."

"I can prove it, monsieur."

"How?"

"By giving a brief history of your later life."

The Irish Monte Cristo looked first at the old detective, who stood near, and then at his charming wife, Katy.

"Prove your assertion, and I will believe that your means of finding out facts are something beyond the ordinary."

"Listen, then. Your name is Redmond O'Connor. You escaped from Ireland after heading an insurrection which never broke out.

"In America you got wind of a secret, and went to Peru, where you secured the famous treasure of the Incas, untold millions, which made you the modern Irish Monte Cristo you are called.

"There in New York you were hunted like a wild beast by the thugs from Peru, the keepers of the treasure which fell into your hands.

"They sought your life, but, thanks to the cunning of this gentleman, Mr. Grimes, you managed to outwit their schemes, marry your Irish sweetheart, and sail for the Mediterranean.

"Your vessel touched at Gibraltar, and you landed, hastening into Spain.

"Then, like all sensible people, you aimed for Paris, the city of the world, where you are known at the hotel as Mr. and Mrs. Redmond Darcy."

O'Connor's face told his astonishment.

As for Mr. Grimes, he appeared amused.

This sort of business lay within the scope of his intelligence; he could readily comprehend how all these facts had been picked up by the French police, but at the same time he was bound to admire their methods.

"We are not under suspicion, then?" he asked.

"*Parbleu !* no, monsieur. We are only too happy

to have you with us. But a sense of duty constrains me to tell you bad news."

"Ah! what is that?"

"You are followed, messieurs. The enemy discovered your trick too late to accompany you, but four of them sailed the next day on the City of Rome, bound for Liverpool."

O'Connor and Mr. Grimes exchanged glances. Already trouble was rising up for them.

"What else did you learn, monsieur?"

"They landed at Liverpool on the ninth, and started for Havre, passing through la belle France, and this very morning they enter Rome."

"A close shave, but they won't find us."

"Be not too sure, monsieur. The steamer you came on has entered its port. They probably know by this time that you left it at Gibraltar."

"Given those points, the inevitable conclusion is that you have been drawn to glittering Paris."

"They will seek you here, depend on it, and unless you manage to elude them, we must look out for serious trouble."

O'Connor drew Mr. Grimes aside.

They talked for a few minutes, while the gallant French detective was making himself agreeable to the handsome wife of the Irish Monte Cristo.

He saw that Katy O'Connor was a woman in a thousand, loving, tender, and yet ready to do and dare for the man she loved so devotedly.

The keen, observing eyes of the French officer read her character, and he admired her.

"Monsieur, your information is exact?"

"You will find it does not vary a particle."

"Can you discover when these men leave the Eter-

nal City, by what train, and at what time they will reach Paris?"

The official smiled.

"You wish to enjoy Paris as long as possible. I will bring you the information before night. Then, some hours before they arrive, you can hide your trail and proceed to Germany or Norway."

"No, we shall pass them on the road."

"You are bound for Rome?"

"It is the last place they would look for us."

"True, and the daring plan often succeeds where a milder one fails. Success, messieurs."

The French detective was gone.

"Come," said O'Connor, "since we may have only a day at present to see the gay city, let us put in our time to the best advantage."

To this all agreed.

They went from one object of interest to another, and managed to see a great deal before the shades of evening fell around them.

Paris and London differ in this respect.

A week in the former gives an ordinary tourist all he cares to see of it, unless the gay butterfly life has an attraction for him.

On the other hand, after weeks of sight seeing there are still objects of interest to be found in and around the great city of London.

Wearied with the labors of this day of action, the little party returned to their hotel.

They were dining.

With unlimited means, every luxury that money could buy was placed at their disposal.

While they were in the midst of the meal, who should show up but the polite police official.

Of course he was invited to join them.

The conversation was in French, which all understood.

Taking advantage of the absence of the waiter, the momentous subject was broached.

"You have heard, Monsieur le Sergeant?"

"Within the hour, monsieur."

"To what effect?"

"A train left Rome at six thirty-five by way of the Mont St. Cenis tunnel route. The four dark gentlemen from Péru were on board."

"Bound for Paris?"

"Yes, direct."

"How long will it take for them to reach here?"

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"That depends, monsieur."

"On what?"

"Many things. We have occasional accidents on our railroad lines as well as you in America. Who knows but what our four gentlemen, locked in compartment four of the Paris Express, may be slaughtered at the foot of the Alps."

"Accidents aside, when are they due here?"

The Gaul took out an intricate time table, which he seemed to have at his fingers' ends.

"The train makes many stops. It is due in Paris to-morrow evening at 6:12."

"That gives us another day for sight seeing. We shall sleep soundly to-night."

The French detective elevated his eyebrows.

He could not but admire the coolness of these two men in the face of a terrible danger.

"I am not so sure of that, monsieur."

"Say you so?"

"The coast is not clear."

"I understand. One of their comrades, arriving

by a French steamer at Havre, has remained over here in Paris."

"Exactly. There is a party here under the name of Gonzales, to whom they have telegraphed."

"Putting him on our trail?"

"No, for he had already sighted you. For the last six hours he has kept you in sight, following in a fiacre wherever you went."

Mr. Grimes screwed up his lips as if to whistle, but no sound came forth.

It was his way of expressing surprise.

"Do not look around, but glance into this mirror at the end of the room back of me. Do you see a gentleman eating at the third table?"

"He has his back to the glass?"

"Yes."

"A gray suit of clothes, and black hair?"

"That is true. The man in gray is Gonzales, to whom the others have wired."

"Your scope of knowledge is surprising."

"That is not all. This man has already made his arrangements to dispose of you."

"Meaning me—Redmond O'Connor."

"Exactly. He talked twenty-three minutes with one Rhoul Renaud, the most cunning desperado we have in all wide Paris."

"It is lucky for us we have learned this. Where does Gonzales put up?"

"At this same hotel. He arrived this morning at 10:17. By twenty-five minutes after ten he knew you were here and doing the city. At a quarter to eleven he started out with a guide to track your party, and when noon came he discovered you near the Champs Elysees. As I said before, he never lost sight of you until he saw you were returning to the hotel. Then

it was he found out Renaud and planned—murder.”

Katy’s face grew pale at the word, but she was a brave little woman, and had the utmost confidence in her husband and his friend.

Mr. Grimes grew thoughtful.

“These devils must be circumvented. We can depend upon your assistance, friend?”

“You may, indeed, messieurs.”

“Then we will outwit them yet.”

“You have a plan, Monsieur Grimes?”

“Yes.”

“Would you mind letting me hear it?”

“I meant to tell you, for all depends upon your co-operation.”

“You may count on that beforehand.”

“We will deceive this Gonzales. I shall let it be understood at the office that we have decided to leave on the evening train to-morrow for Brussels, and show tickets to that effect.

“You will have two men and a woman ready, disguised, to take our places. The change can be effected easily enough, and while he hunts them we will, under other conditions, start for Rome.”

“Good, monsieur. I have in my eye the very parties to carry this scheme out. They will not betray themselves until the compatriots of this Gonzales arrive in Brussels. This will give you more than twenty-four hours’ start.”

“It will be our own fault if we do not give them the slip.”

O’Connor pressed something into the hand of the considerate French detective.

“There are a thousand francs for yourself, my good friend, and as much more for those whom you employ to serve our ends.”

"You are too liberal, monsieur. Half—"
 "Say no more. Money is nothing to me. We will hope that all may turn out well."

The waiter came back.

They could speak no more on the subject that was of burning importance, so the conversation became general.

At the conclusion of the meal they passed out, and the gentlemen lit cigars.

O'Connor did not let his wife leave them.

He remembered that in New York his enemies had

stolen Katy away, hoping to hold her as ransom, and making him give up his enormous treasure in order to regain the one being he loved.

If he knew it, he did not mean to let this same thing happen again.

The coast was clear.

"One thing, Monsieur le Sergeant."

"You refer to Rhoul Renaud?"

"I do."

"I shall have him watched. At the same time as

I leave you, Monsieur O'Connor, let me give you a few last words of warning.

"This night, beware—sleep with one eye open, and if beset, shoot to kill. I will see to it that the law

commends your act. *An revoir, messieurs.*"

CHAPTER II.

MR. GRIMES GETS IN HIS WORK.

When the genial French detective officer had left them, the three tourists put their heads close together for a little talk.

The situation was canvassed in low tones, while they watched the gay scene as witnessed from the broad veranda of the hotel.

In the morning Mr. Grimes was to go to the house of a friend, and leave a secret message for O'Connor's former companion in the crusade to find the buried treasure of the Peruvian Incas.

This was a man named Tom Grattan, a whole-souled fellow, devoted to Redmond.

He had left them to visit a certain town where an old relative lived, and was to have rejoined them in Paris later on.

Having been put upon their guard, they watched for Gonzales during the evening.

He did not hover around them, but several times they discovered him close by.

It looked as though he meant to keep them under his observation.

Finally they separated for the night.

They had three rooms adjoining on the second floor of the grand hall, O'Connor and his bride taking two, while the grim old detective occupied the third.

He was there to watch over O'Connor's interests, and it would be hard indeed to find a better man for the purpose.

Mr. Grimes remained to smoke another cigar.

He was usually in a tranquil frame of mind, as he did not let small things worry him.

To-night, however, he seemed uneasy.

What he had seen of these thugs from Peru had stamped them in his mind as desperate men, whom danger would not daunt, and who would never give up their mission while life remained, unless it was accomplished.

He knew they would give his friend great trouble in the near future.

"I see no way of avoiding it all. The only escape lies in the death of these men, and hang me if I like the idea of being instrumental in bringing that about. They are obeying their oath, and carrying out a solemn duty. Altogether it is puzzling. I know they are too keen to be put off the track long. They'll scour Europe from the Pyrenees to Moscow, or the land of the midnight sun, but what they will find us, and then the trouble begins again, for they mean to take that treasure back or have O'Connor's life."

So he mused.

All the while he was being watched by a keen pair of jet black eyes.

Gonzales was near.

The telegram from his fellow thugs had been placed in his hands, and he knew they were now en route for Paris from Rome.

It would be a glorious thing if he could accomplish his work and fulfill the vow before the others arrived on the scene.

One thing he did not like.

On previous occasions this man, the shrewd New York detective, had outwitted them.

If he could be gotten out of the way the coast would be more clear for other work.

A gamin ran up and placed a note in the hands of the smooth-faced American.

It was perfumed delicately, and the writing inside was evidently that of a lady.

Mr. Grimes opened it curiously.

What did he read?

The note was such an one as no doubt passes in gay Paris many a time.

The writer, who signed herself as a young widow, Madame L'Strange, declared that she had seen the American gentleman, and would like to make his acquaintance. She was wealthy, and he could judge of her personal appearance from the inclosed photograph, which failed to do the original justice. If he would meet her in the presence of a friend, and form an acquaintance that might lead to mutual benefit, he would accompany the boy to her residence, 15 Rue —

The photograph was of a beauty with eyes that melted in liquid love.

Mr. Grimes was a man.

He seemed to fall into the trap at once.

His first act was to press the picture to his lips—it was enough to intoxicate any man to have a beauty like that make advances of love.

Speaking a few words to the boy, he put his hand to his back pocket as if to make sure that he was armed.

Then he left the veranda, and walked away, with the gamin at his side.

From behind a neighboring post the dark-faced Gonzales witnessed all this.

He rubbed his hands together.

Really the plot was working well, thanks to one weak point in the detective's armor, and a woman's face.

Was this so?

Had the cunning Mr. Grimes succumbed to a miserable trap simply because it was baited with a lovely woman's picture?

Not much.

He saw through the game from the start, and had been playing a part.

When he started off with the boy he was half tempted to go all the way, and see what kind of a trap they had set for him.

Of course the photograph had nothing to do with it, as he knew this had been purchased in a shop where it was on sale as a French beauty.

The fools had forgotten to erase the selling price from the back of the picture.

Mr. Grimes concluded, however, that this was taking too much risk.

It might amuse him, but while he was in the employ of the Irish Monte Cristo he had no business to assume unnecessary risks.

Having made up his mind upon his subject, he still believed it would be well to deceive the watching Gonzales into the belief that his plan had worked.

This was why he followed the lad.

Well did he know that at No. 15 Rue—— he would meet the assassin blade of one Rhoul Renaud instead of the fair widow of the epistle.

When they had gone some little distance from the hotel the detective made up his mind to halt, as his object was attained.

He put his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Step aside," he said, in French.

The boy eyed him keenly and did so.

"Now, my little man, understand in the first place that I go no further with you.. The game is known to me. You are hired to swear that a lady, the original of this picture, sent you to me. It is not so; you cannot deceive me."

"Monsieur—I—the lady——"

"Be still. I tell you, it was not a lady who sent you, but a man. I will describe him."

He did so, repeating what the French officer had said with regard to Rhoul Renaud.

The boy had been drilled in his part.

This was something so entirely unexpected, however, that he was quite unprepared to meet the emergency.

"Monsieur, I did not mean—it was not in me to wish you harm—I beg——"

"Never mind. What did they give you to carry out your little game?"

"Two francs, monsieur."

"See, I hand you five. Now confess."

The boy shook his head.

"There is nothing to confess."

"How?"

"Monsieur knows it all."

The old detective smiled.

"My guess was right, then. This Renaud hired you to fetch me there. He showed you the picture of a lovely woman. You were to swear it was her fair hands that gave you the note?"

"It is all true, monsieur."

"Was this man alone?"

"There were two others. He left them in the house, and came part of the way with me."

"Very good. What is your name, boy?"

"Jean."

"Well, Jean, if you are a wise boy, you will give No. 15 a wide berth from now on."

"I shall, monsieur."

"You have been doubly paid. Now, scamper off."

Jean did not halt upon the order of his going.

He had more money in his pockets than those same receptacles had ever known at one time.

As for Mr. Grimes, he stood there for a few minutes deliberating.

Then he slipped back to the hotel, hiding his face as much as possible, and avoiding the glare of lights whenever he could.

It was his intention to pass up to his room at once.

He supposed O'Connor was asleep, and hence made no attempt to communicate the latest phase in their game.

It was near midnight

Mr. Grimes had left his door unfastened.

He did not occupy the bed, but lay on a cover behind it, resting easily.

A thread was so arranged that when the door was opened it would arouse him, being tied to one of his fingers.

So he slept without a worry.

A sharp pain suddenly aroused him.

The thread had been drawn taut by the door before it broke.

He understood instantly what it meant.

Danger.

Some one who had no right to do so was about entering his room.

Mr. Grimes lay quiet.

The only movement he made was to reach out one

hand and close his fingers over the butt of his ever faithful revolver.

Then he listened.

The door creaked on its hinges.

Light steps crossed the room.

It was not dark, as the moon shone without, and objects could be distinguished.

The footsteps approached the bed.

Then came a chuckling sound.

It was as if the intruder was tickled to find that the couch was vacant, remembering what trick had been played.

Then the man turned from the bed.

Undoubtedly it was Renaud, the assassin.

He was there to accomplish the aim of the thug from Peru, and murder O'Connor.

How would he attempt it?

There were various ways in which a deed of this sort might be carried out.

The knife was the oldest, and if well managed it made no noise to arouse the house.

After his bloody deed, he would steal all he could lay his hands on.

It would then look as though an ordinary thief had entered the apartments of Monte Cristo, and probably being discovered, committed a crime in order to avoid being handed over to a gendarme.

Paris has a fine police.

In spite of that fact some terrible crimes have gone undiscovered there.

Look at London.

An infamous villain has done murder after murder there in the heart of Whitechapel, and the chance of apprehending him seems to diminish with every new crime.

There are deeds done that baffle human skill in detecting them, though, perhaps, truth will out sooner or later.

Mr. Grimes did not mean to lie there longer.

Inch by inch he was drawing himself forward, intending to peer around the foot of the bed, and see what this man was up to.

He had heard him close the door leading to the hall quietly behind him.

Evidently your high-toned French assassin does not want to be disturbed in his operations.

He wraps himself up in his business, and goes in for all it is worth.

The detective reached the point where his head, still in the shadow, protruded beyond the bed.

He was in a position to see.

Holding his head up with one hand, he coolly watched the operations of the man who had entered that room on a mission of blood.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT WAS SEEN IN THE MOONLIGHT.

What was the man doing?

He crouched near the door that opened into the adjoining room.

No doubt the expert could easily have picked the lock had he desired to enter.

In the light afforded by the soft moon Mr. Grimes saw him crouching down.

He appeared to be listening intently.

Regular breathing from the adjoining apartment would tell him that O'Connor slept.

Then his time would come to open the door, to steal across the floor, and sheathe his dagger in the heart of the sleeping Cræsus.

He overlooked one thing.

The watch dog had not been first disposed of, although, as we have seen, Renaud, the desperado, believed such to have been the case.

As if satisfied on this score, that the Monte Cristo was sound asleep, the man arose.

For the first time Mr. Grimes noticed that he had a small box beside him.

What it contained was a mystery.

The assassin bent over it.

Presently Mr. Grimes saw him make a move.

He had something in his hand.

It looked like a small rubber hose, one end of which was connected with the mysterious box.

The loose end the man seemed to be pushing through the key-hole in the door.

Like a thunderclap what appeared to be the truth broke upon the detective.

The fellow was too advanced in scientific appliances to descend to the brutal knife.

He meant to accomplish his end in a manner that was as deadly, and yet left no trace.

The box or case contained some powerful gas, which was particularly deadly in its condensed form.

This he meant to throw into the rooms beyond.

From peaceful slumber the Irish Monte Cristo and his fair bride would pass over the border to death.

Even an open window had doubtless been provided for in the make up of the gas.

The awful nature of the contemplated crime made Mr. Grimes shudder at first.

Then he shut his teeth hard.

Pity would be wasted upon such a wretch as this; he deserved death on the spot.

While he still lay there the detective leveled his revolver at the man.

He could see where to aim. Just as he was on the point of pulling the trigger, it seemed to him as though some hand held him back—he did not fire.

Instead the revolver was lowered. A thought had flashed through his brain. What if he killed this wretch? There was no actual necessity for it, and the fellow was but the tool—willing, it is true—of a far greater villain.

This was not what restrained Mr. Grimes. He saw trouble ahead. Suppose the man was slain, in spite of his friend, the French detective, they might be detained a couple of days to prove the truth. This would allow the four thugs speeding from the Eternal City to reach Paris. It would destroy all their plans. Mr. Grimes was used to thinking quickly.

He could meet emergencies. Having changed his mind he did not mean to let the rascal continue his dastardly work. His next move was to crawl out from the place of concealment, and gain his feet.

Fortunately he had removed his shoes, so that this could be done noiselessly.

A slight hissing sound greeted his ears.

At the same time he caught a faint odor of escaping gas, pungent and penetrating.

It seemed to vibrate the atmosphere immediately.

Mr. Grimes understood what it meant.

The fellow had turned the valve screw, and was now poisoning the air of the rooms beyond.

What diabolical cunning!

Surely the idea must have been conceived by a fiend of Tophet and dropped into a human mind.

There was no time to lose.

One minute might be all that was necessary in order to accomplish the dread result.

Seconds count at such a crisis.

Mr. Grimes had succeeded in gliding across the floor, for the room was small.

He was now just behind the intruder.

So silent had been his approach that the man had not suspected his presence.

The first intimation he had of danger was when the ice cold steel of the Yankee detective's revolver pressed against his temple.

Shuddering he looked up.

It was as if his limbs had been paralyzed by the sensation that went over him.

"Turn that gas off, or I'll scatter your brains," said Mr. Grimes in the sternest of voices.

He spoke in French.

Rhoul Renaud understood him.

Mechanically he bent his fingers to the task.

Success attended.

The hissing of escaping gas ceased. Mr. Grimes had saved his friend's life.

"Get up."

There was something in the magnetic manner of the old detective that cowed most men.

Renaud knew he had met his master, and his craven soul cowered before the other.

Dextrously the American slipped a pair of darbies upon his wrists.

The man was a prisoner.

Then he produced a stout cord which he always carried with him, and bound the fellow's ankles.

This done he let Renaud lie upon the floor, while he locked the door and prepared to sleep.

Through the balance of the night he slept—dozing with one eye open.

Renaud tried to escape, but finding it useless, lay there and groaned dismally, until the American threatened to gag him unless he became quiet, which announcement effectually stopped him.

Morning came.

Mr. Grimes knocked on the door between.

"Hello, there! doctor," came in the cheery tones of O'Connor—he often called Mr. Grimes by that name, the detective having once practiced.

"Come in here when you can."

A few minutes later Redmond opened the hall door, and stepped into the room.

"I hope nothing has gone wrong—no sudden illness, doctor, for—bless my eyes, who's this?"

He suddenly saw the prostrate form and scowling face of the detective's prisoner.

"You have heard of Rhoul Renaud?"

"Why, our friend the officer, was speaking of him."

"Well, this is the identical man."

O'Connor looked at him curiously.

"You have captured him and brought him here?"

"Yes and no."

"Explain, doctor."

"Well, he is in my power, but I did not take the trouble to bring him here."

"How then?"

"He came himself."

"Ah! intending to do you mischief."

"No, it was you he aimed for."

"And entered your room by mistake?"

"Again you are off the track, sir. He believed that I was a dead man."

"Come, you must have had an adventure since I saw you last night."

Mr. Grimes laughed.

"Several of them, I should say."

So he told O'Connor the story of the note, and showed him the handsome photograph.

The Irish Monte Cristo looked his surprise, but said nothing, preferring to listen.

Then came the second adventure, and O'Connor was more than astonished.

He took the detective's hand.

"Mr. Grimes, you are a wonderful man. What if he had succeeded?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"It would have been hard on you, my friend."

Redmond O'Connor scowled at the wretch who crouched upon the floor of the little hotel room.

He was thinking more of the peril that had hovered over his wife than himself.

Having spent several hours lying there, the assassin was not only stiff but cold.

He showed fear.

Perhaps a scaffold hovered before his mental vision, the reward of former crimes.

"What shall we do with this wretch?"

"I was keeping him for you to see, sir. I am a doctor, you know. I have a scalpel in my valise. If you say the word I will carve him up and pack him away in the trunk that stands yonder."

The wretched Renaud could stand no more.

Bellowing with fear, he made an attempt to throw himself on his knees before them.

He cried—he raved—he pleaded for mercy.

His craven soul shivered, and abject fear shone in his staring orbs.

Mr. Grimes took out his revolver.

"Quiet, you wretch. Do you not hear—we have decided not to kill you."

He began to shower blessings on them.

"Our friend the detective will be here in ten minutes exactly. You shall go with him."

They withdrew from the fellow, and proceeded to examine the little infernal machine with which he had meant to take the lives of the Irish Monte Cristo and his lovely bride.

It was simply a reservoir holding the gas, which could be made to flow through the rubber tube at the will of the person controlling it.

"Some French arrangement, I'll be bound. They beat the world at ingenious contrivances for carrying out evil plans—yes, even beat the Yankees."

"Glad to hear it, Mr. Grimes. Now, when shall we leave Paris?"

"On the evening train. It departs half an hour before the arrival of the other."

"Well, I leave all details to you."

They spoke in low tones, as they had no desire to let the French rascal overhear.

The ten minutes passed.

A rap at the door.

Mr. Grimes opened it.

"Ah! good morning, Monsieur le Sergeant."

The French detective looked quickly at the two men as if he would read their faces.

"Has he been here?"

"You mean Renaud?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I invited him to remain."

Stepping aside Mr. Grimes allowed the officer to see the manacled desperado.

M. le Sergeant laughed.

"Ah, you are there, friend Renaud. You made a mistake in this gentleman's character. Now, you shall pay the penalty. Monsieur, do me the extreme honor of telling me how it happened."

Mr. Grimes did so laconically.

He seldom wasted words.

There was nothing very comical in his narrative, but the French official seemed to think it one of the best jokes he had ever heard.

He laughed and grimaced and shrugged his shoulders until the end was reached.

"Now to business, messieurs. I shall take Renaud away with me. In one hour I shall return. Then you may hear what arrangements I have made for the other business on hand."

He was as good as his word.

The desperado's feet were set at liberty, and as

soon as he could walk he was marched down out of the hotel and away to some prison, the detective carrying the gas retort under his arm.

They had just finished breakfast when he again made his appearance, smiling.

Soon the conference was ended, and all arrangements had been perfected.

The enemy had made it possible for them to do a little double dealing, and they were ready to take advantage of the opportunity.

After this they separated.

Our friends spent the morning in sight seeing, and when the afternoon drew near its close prepared to work the little stratagem which was to blind the eyes of Gonzales and send his men on a false trail to Brussels.

CHAPTER IV.

A HEAD IN THE WINDOW.

Everything worked to a charm.

For much of this they could thank the astute French official who had looked after matters and arranged the case.

Gonzales was deceived.

When our party finally started for the station it was in a way that defied detection.

Mr. Grimes went alone, in the guise of a French soldier, at home on a furlough, and as he had been provided with a document and passport through the kindness of M. le Sergeant, he experienced no difficulty along the route, for when he chose to return to his proper self he had his own passport.

O'Connor and his wife looked like a couple of old pensioners as they drove away.

The Irish Monte Cristo was cleverly disguised, while Katy wore an outlandish, ancient dress, and covered her face with a heavy veil.

Even under this she had used paint and powder with such effect that at a glance one would be inclined to believe this was some old maid endeavoring to rejuvenate by the use of cosmetics.

Thus they arrived at the station separately, that is Mr. Grimes seemed to have no connection with the other couple.

They had openly purchased tickets for Brussels during the day, and shown them around at the hotel, secretly handing them over to a quiet gentleman who said he came from M. le Sergeant.

Now they purchased tickets for Rome, managing to be put into the same carriage, a little manipulation accomplishing this thing, with a fee placed in the hand of the guard.

While their train waited, detained beyond its time for some reason, they saw a party arrive which gave them some amusement.

The lady was veiled, and might easily have passed for Katy O'Connor.

One of the men was Mr. Grimes, and the other bore a resemblance to Redmond.

Their make-up reflected credit on the sharp officer of the Paris detective corps.

These parties wished to go to Brussels on account of certain business that was to be done.

This was a splendid opportunity.

Our party, in the secrecy of their carriage, were almost convulsed with laughter.

It was indeed singular to watch their own fac similes move around, doing little things that were really tricks of their own individuality, and which had been caught by the keen eye of the wonderful police sergeant.

"There he is."

Mr. Grimes pointed to a spot further down.

Looking, they beheld Gonzales.

The man had undoubtedly shadowed those he believed to be the three fugitives.

He seemed uneasy.

Time and again he consulted his watch as he walked nervously up and down the platform.

He would look toward the Brussels train in which the three counterfeits had vanished, and then glance eagerly down the railroad tracks.

It was evident that he anticipated the arrival of

the train from Rome before the one left for Belgium.

At length signals were heard.

A train came in.

Bustle and confusion ensued.

Our friends were watching.

It was not long ere they saw several gentlemen, quietly dressed, leave the train.

They were very much after the style of Gonzales. There could be no doubt but that these were the men from Peru, sworn to recover the treasure of the Incas, or punish those who had secured it.

Gonzales seemed to discover them about the same time as themselves.

He started toward them.

When they met there seemed to be a short, excited conversation, during which Gonzales pointed dramatically toward the Brussels train.

Then they hurried to the ticket-office.

A bell sounded.

A train was about to start.

It was the one for the north of France.

There were some loud cries.

Then four gentlemen sprang into a carriage near the end of the train, which moved away.

"Farewell, and good luck to you," said O'Connor, with a laugh, waving his hand after the train.

Mr. Grimes was thinking.

His silence drew the other's attention.

"What's wrong, sir?"

"I was worrying over a certain fact."

"Connected with those men?"

"Yes."

"Tell me what it is."

"The officer told us there were four in Rome."

"I am sure of it—he repeated the statement."

"Only three got off the train."

"Now that I think of it, you are right."

"Then where can the fourth be?"

"Perhaps left in Rome."

"I fear it."

"There is time to change our course yet if you think best. We can go to Switzerland, and then to Constantinople and the Holy Land."

"No, we are booked for Rome, and we will go on to Rome. Only through the greatest poor luck in the world will we be discovered."

"We had better keep up the disguise."

"Yes, until in Rome. Then we can throw them off, and seek some private house instead of an hotel."

"I have letters to a lady who sometimes entertains travelers. We will go there."

"Listen, I believe we are about to start."

"What caused the delay?"

"I heard one man say the locomotive had given out, and they had to send for another."

"Poor traveling this on Continental roads."

"I don't like it near as well as a ride on the New York and Chicago Limited. Here we are cooped up in a small compartment, locked in by the guard, and unable to enjoy the strange sights that in America make traveling lose half of its monotony."

"Here we go."

There was no doubt of it now.

Bells rang, men called out, the lights flared, and presently they were leaving the station.

Once out of Paris they dashed along at a lively pace, and miles were soon put between them and the gay French capital.

Our friends soon settled down to making the best of the night.

Through the hours of darkness they annihilated distance, and reached up into the towering mountains that separate France and Italy.

Then came the great tunnel.

That was an engineering feat that must always shed luster upon the daring engineer who built it. They were at last in Italy.

The wild country began to change, and they could distinguish the characteristics of the peasants of Italy, marking the difference that existed between them and those of la belle France.

Strange scenes always attracted their attention and interested all of the party.

The day wore away.

On toward Rome thundered the express.

The Eternal City should have been reached in the early evening, but as delays had followed them in the start, they did not debark until seventeen minutes after eleven Roman time.

It was too late to hunt up the house to which they had been referred.

While en route they had arranged a plan of action.

They were to separate, Mr. Grimes seeking one hotel, while O'Connor and his wife went to another in a distant part of the city.

This was done for diplomacy.

If their enemies came to hunt them they would look for a party of three, and follow up a clue thus secured to further disclosures.

All this was done.

Mr. Grimes found himself in a poor room of the shabby hotel he had selected at random.

He did not anticipate a good night's sleep, and

yet he was tired enough to rest almost anywhere, so long as he was undisturbed.

Not finding the bed to suit him he took some of the covers and rolled up on the floor.

Before doing so he examined the room.

The *hotel* would have been termed a tavern in this country, but then they do things in quite a different way across the big pond.

Truth to tell, Mr. Grimes did not think well of his choice, and made up his mind not to trust to luck entirely on the next occasion.

A few inquiries would avoid much trouble.

He had found no way of fastening the door.

True, there was a bolt, and one might shoot it into the socket provided with considerable noise and confidence; but an examination would reveal the fact that the bolt did not hold worth a cent.

The detective took a chair with a broken back, and bending it over, utilized it to serve in the place of a brace propped against a knot hole in the floor.

Thus he believed he was safe against intrusion from this one quarter at least.

There was another place he did not feel quite so certain about.

A window.

He must have it open to secure ventilation.

It could be reached easily from a tree, a limb of which swung just below.

Again the wily detective set a trap.

A strong black thread was drawn across the opening, one end of which was to be secured to his wrist while he lay there sleeping.

As he looked out he heard the rain pattering down upon the leaves of the tree.

The night was gloomy and black.

Not an object could be seen, save a few wet leaves and the limbs of the tree, disclosed when he held his candle aloft.

A closet remained.

The door of this was fast, so he did not bother attempting to open it.

Perhaps the people were honest.

Mr. Grimes did not profess to be able to read foreign character as well as English and American.

He would know this fact better in the morning, after the night had gone.

When he went to sleep it was with the soft patter of the gentle rain on the roof, beating a lullaby that brought back visions of his youth.

Something awoke him.

He suddenly realized that a rat had scampered across his face as he lay on the floor.

With an exclamation of disgust he swung his arm around his head vigorously, and there was a concert of squeaks, a pattering of tiny feet, and then all became still as the grave once more.

After that, somehow or other, Mr. Grimes did not seem able to get to sleep again.

He recalled an adventure he had had with giant rats in a New York sewer some years before, when the loathsome rodents had attacked him in swarms, leaping at him with angry squeaks, as though determined to tear the intruder to pieces.

These thoughts stirred his mind so that he could not settle into a sleep again.

The rain had ceased.

Even the breeze had gone down, and outside all was deathly quiet.

It was singular to think that he was in Rome, the wonderful city set upon seven hills,

Her history had been familiar to him from boyhood, away back from the story of Romulus and Remus, the wolf's whelp, up to the time of the present.

The sensation was peculiar.

He turned from one side to another, but although he shut his eyes sleep failed to come.

Ah! the breeze must have arisen again.

He heard the leaves rustle outside.

Then the sound ceased.

What was that?

The twinge came upon his right wrist.

Mr. Grimes opened his eyes, and as he chanced to be lying with his face toward the window he could see its outlines against the gray sky without, there being an opening in the tree.

There in dark silhouette against the sky he could distinguish the head, hat and shaggy hair of a man, who had climbed the tree and was ready to pass in at the open window.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGGARS OF ROME.

The detective did not stir.

He was rapidly revolving the matter in his mind, and making up his plan of action.

It was easy to see that the fellow intended to act the part of a robber.

Perhaps he meant to do more.

He was at the window now, and seemed to be staring into the room, as though he would penetrate the darkness there and discover in what part of it the inmate was taking his rest.

Mr. Grimes moved.

He did this so noiselessly that even the sharpest of ears would not have caught a sound.

Upon gaining his feet he advanced in the direction of the window.

Then he paused.

Another idea came to him.

He put out his hands, and by groping managed to reach a corner, where he passed behind a chair and sank upon one knee.

The man was coming in.

He had already thrust half his body through the window, and was wriggling along.

Then came a low thud.

His feet had struck the floor.

Mr. Grimes knew he would make in the direction of the bed.

Evidently the fellow knew the arrangement of things inside the apartment.

He made no mistake.

In another minute Mr. Grimes could hear him hiss his anger at finding the bed empty.

The absence of clothes upon it told him that the party in the room had slept on the floor.

When he found them warm, he could understand that the one he sought had just crawled out of his nest.

What did this fellow seek, anyway?

Had he been sent here by any one?

Mr. Grimes heard him moving around.

As he did not find any one, the fellow appeared to get rather nervous over the matter.

When he came to the stand bearing the candle he scratched a match.

In another moment the light had been applied to the wick of the candle, and the little room no longer lay in darkness.

The man shot a swift glance around.

What did he see?

Enough to strike terror to his soul.

The Yankee detective was seated astride the old wooden chair, his arms resting on the back, in the laziest position possible.

One of his hands grasped a revolver.

It covered the shaggy haired Italian.

When his eyes beheld this spectacle the intruder was struck with apprehension.

He seemed to realize that the tables had been suddenly turned upon him.

He had entered this apartment bent upon some deed of violence, and here the unpleasant discovery was thrust upon him that he had caught a Tartar in his play.

Just then he would have given much for darkness to have shielded him.

One movement of his hand, and the candle could be thrown upon the floor and extinguished.

He dared not make it.

There was something bearing upon him that was quicker than this muscular action.

A bullet would be apt to fly.

The attitude of the Yankee was suggestive of just such action as this.

As a last resort the fellow would try diplomacy.

"Well, what d'ye want in my room, man?"

The fellow wagged his unkempt head.

"Me make big mistake. Me tink it my own room. Verra sorry disturb; if let out door me finda own room soon."

"Ah! indeed, and you're in the habit of entering your room by the window, eh?"

The fellow was not yet brought to bay.

"Me losa key, and think me no be able to get in. Inglis gentleman must excusa me."

"I suppose you were going to pick the lock with that dagger you hold."

The Italian raised the blade.

A look came over his brown face that made him seem like a demon.

Mr. Grimes thought he would not care to come in contact with this fellow; better keep him at arm's length.

Then the fellow grinned.

"Inglis man right. Me meant to picka lock. No use now, so me put him away."

Suiting the action to the word he caused the bright blade to disappear in his ragged garments.

The detective was puzzled.

Had this wretch been sent to do murder, or was it an every day pastime with him?

The detective despaired of getting positive answers from such a man as this.

He could not shoot him.

As to handing him over to the authorities, Mr. Grimes did not want to be mixed up in any such affair.

What was he to do then?

There remained only one course, and this was to let the fellow go free.

"Look here, my man, you came in through that window, now I'll give you just one minute to pass out of it again. If you are here when the time goes, I'm going to make a target of you. See?"

The man understood English.

More than that, the gestures of the detective were suggestive enough to inform him what the man who held the revolver was driving at.

He cast one half frightened look around him.

Then, with an exclamation, he sprang toward the still open window.

Perhaps he half expected to hear the report of the Yankee's revolver, and feel the sting of the bullet as it pierced his flesh.

It was ludicrous to witness the hurried manner in which he took his departure.

Scrambling through the window, he seemed to get stuck somehow or other, for his long legs waved wildly in the air.

Then the fellow made a supreme effort.

The legs disappeared.

There was a crash, as he broke through the branches, followed by a heavy fall.

Mr. Grimes had reached the window.

When he looked out he heard a groan, and knew the fellow was crawling away.

This was a very unpleasant beginning.

He hoped the old city of Rome did not treat all her visitors in this fashion.

The man had very probably entered his room in the hope of plunder.

Traveling Americans are generally supposed to have pockets filled with money.

They are the target of all manner of persecutions when once they strike foreign soil.

Mr. Grimes arranged his trap again.

He did not mean to be cheated out of his sleep by any such annoyance.

Again he lay down.

Some men would have been too excited by the recent occurrence to sleep.

Not so Obed Grimes.

These things were an old story with him.

Once the danger was over, his nerves did not feel the shock a particle.

Soon he was slumbering quietly. When he awoke it was morning.

The rain had ceased, and the sun peeped into his window, giving promise of a good day. Obed Grimes wondered how the men from Peru were feeling. He hoped they had enjoyed the trip to the gay capital of Belgium. By this time they had no doubt discovered the trick that had been put upon them, and that the party they had followed was a delusion. No doubt they were hurrying back to Paris to pick up the trail where it had been lost. Too late. Circumstances had changed since then. They would find themselves at sea. One thing alone worried the detective.

Where was the other thug?

Six had come over on the *Servia*, but only four had gone to Rome, one having been left behind in the city of London.

Three only had returned to Paris to join forces with Gonzales there.

Had the other been left in Rome?

It looked as though these men intended to divide their forces up, leaving a man to guard each of the great cities.

If this should prove to be their plan, our friends could give them the slip by taking passage for Egypt, and remaining there or else in the Holy Land for a time.

Mr. Grimes descended.

He found that O'Connor and his bride had not yet made their appearance.

Waiting for them, he walked up and down.

Sights that were strange to American eyes met his view on all sides.

Mr. Grimes felt in splendid condition.

Somehow or other the sea voyage seemed to have done him good.

At length his friends made their appearance, and all ate breakfast together at the hotel where the Monte Cristo had put up.

For the time being they believed they could put off all thoughts of danger, and enjoy the sights.

First of all a courier was secured.

He took them to this place and that in the carriage which O'Connor chartered.

Everywhere swarms of beggars ran after them, holding out their hands beseechingly.

"Baksheesh!" was their constant whine and shout.

The worst disgrace of the city on the Tiber to-day lies in its swarm of wretched mendicants that start up from every corner.

Some whine, others demand a trifle with fierce aspect, as though it were their right.

It is impossible to be rid of them.

Once you toss a trifle out, and it seems that new swarms spring up.

They are like buzzards hovering over a dainty repast—coming from everywhere, and in really countless numbers.

Our friends soon became accustomed to the regulation whine of supplicants, and paid little or no attention to their importunities.

One man followed them from place to place.

He was a tall, athletic fellow, exceedingly ragged, and with the countenance of a fiend.

At first he was humble.

When they came out of a church or picture gallery he was bowing and holding out a dirty paw.

Then his manner became more aggressive.

He ran after the carriage continually.

His hoarse voice bawled out for "baksheesh."

Evidently one system of tactics having failed he meant to try another.

They would have to pay him well to get rid of his hoarse howl.

O'Connor scowled at him.

The wretch simply put out his hand and grinned.

Soon the carriage started in the direction where lay the ruins of the old Coliseum.

Still this inveterate bore ran after—it seemed as though nothing would daunt him.

"Heavens! I will not stand this longer," the impatient Monte Cristo said.

He put his hand in his pocket as if about to hurl some money back on the road for this one persistent beggar to pick up.

"Stay! I will guarantee to send him away."

"Then do so, Mr. Grimes."

"Stop the carriage."

The vehicle came to a pause, and the beggar advanced smiling, thinking his time of triumph had surely arrived.

He was mistaken.

The form of Mr. Grimes arose to view, and then came the sharp report of a revolver.

Again and again it was heard, and the bullets whistled by close to the surprised beggar's head.

He turned and ran as if the Old Nick and a legion of fiends were in hot pursuit, nor were they troubled by his attentions again.

CHAPTER VI.

BRIGANDS OF THE OLD COLISEUM.

They had some peace.

On the return to the city the same swarm of mendicants surrounded them.

"This is abominable," said O'Connor.

"I see but one way of avoiding it."

"How?"

"We can disguise ourselves."

"Ah! but it is not because we are O'Connor and Grimes that they beset us. All travelers are thus harassed in the Infernal City."

"That is just it. I mean that we represent the native element—become high blood Italians for the time being. They will cease to persecute us then, as they only annoy foreigners."

"A bright thought, Mr. Grimes."

The idea was not a bad one.

It would work in a double sense, as their old foes would be baffled, too.

The day had been pleasantly spent, only for this one annoyance of the mendicants.

They said this was a poor time for the beggars, too, as their business had to some extent been interfered with by the law.

Our friends who, had suffered so much, wondered what it must have been before the law was invoked in favor of the tourist.

Mr. Grimes took entire charge of the task of transforming them into Italians.

He secured tannin, with which they colored their skin.

When necessary their hair was concealed or changed to black.

Some alterations were made in their dress.

Then the party sought a new house, at which they put up under high-sounding names.

O'Connor was Count Braganza, and his wife wore the honors of countess meekly, while our friend the old detective, played the part of private secretary under the title of Signor Tagliapetra.

The good people of the house understood the game, and made much fun over it.

They saw that their guests were rolling in wealth, and understood that their sole motive was to avoid persecution by the mendicants who flocked upon the trail of every foreigner.

On the following day the courier again made his appearance.

Of course he was in the secret.

It mattered little to him what the foreigners did, so long as they paid him the princely sum which he had promised to give his services in exchange for.

This day the change was striking.

Not a beggar bothered them.

They were taken for a party of high blooded Italians, perhaps from Milan, Florence, or Genoa, doing the metropolis, and the mendicants knew how hopeless would be their pitiful cry of "baksheesh" in the educated ears of their countrymen.

Our friends had been over a good deal of the ground now.

What interested them most were the remains of old time Rome, the new quarter, with its modern buildings, calling for no examination.

"Judging from the way old Rome is giving way to modern style, I should say that fifty years hence it will not pay one to come here. As much can be seen in New York any day," declared Mr. Grimes, as they saw the work of building which was daily and hourly going on.

It was surprising.

The people seemed to have lost all interest in their grand past, and were living for the future.

So day after day passed on.

They settled down to taking it easy.

Nothing had been heard from their foes.

In fact they had come to take it for granted that these worthies, being baffled in their search, had returned once more to Peru.

Mr. Grimes always kept on the watch. He did not feel so positive with regard to this matter as did O'Connor.

It was now full moon again.

Katy had heard of people going to see the old Coliseum by moonlight. Indeed, the courier had spoken of it several times during this day.

O'Connor had paid him for his services.

They would use him for a few days still, as they had not yet visited the wonderful catacombs that lie under the city of Rome.

He had spoken of needing some money, so the Irish Monte Cristo had given him what was due.

Mr. Grimes chanced to be near by.

When the guide had been left temporarily behind explaining the work on some tapestry to Katy, he took O'Connor to task for his imprudence.

"I am afraid you do wrong to show such a well filled wallet here, sir."

"What! you don't suspect the courier?"

"Gerald may be honest enough, though I trust none of his kind further than I can see them. At sight of the roll of bills you exhibited his eyes almost bulged out of his head."

"Then I'll be more careful in future."

"The best way is to have money in several pockets. Then what you display will not arouse any one's cupidity."

"A good idea; I'll do it."

It was determined to visit the Coliseum that night, and look upon it in the romantic light of the heavenly body.

The carriage came around on time.

It was a beautiful night, for the sky was of the deepest blue-black hue, and the stars appeared like silver gems set in velvet.

The moon was just full.

Hanging in the east, about nine o'clock, she seemed like a globe of gold, suspended in some mysterious manner above.

It was just such a night as Rome has become celebrated for—the ideal night dreamed of by lovers, when all nature seems to be under a magic spell, and responds to the finer senses, just as the strings of the harp do to the educated fingers of the musician.

Katy was in raptures.

She seemed to drink in the glories of the scene, and her soul responded to the hour.

All of them were singularly quiet.

Mr. Grimes said nothing of his suspicions, but had his eye on the courier.

Gerald did not seem at his ease.

Perhaps his dinner had disagreed with him.

Mr. Grimes appeared to think the Italian had something heavy on his mind.

Somehow the thoughts of the detective went back to the afternoon scene when O'Connor was paying the courier off.

He had seen a look of avarice flash over the face of Gerald then.

Most men have their price.

A great many have been honest because they have never been tempted to their limit

A few can withstand anything.

Gerald had seen what was a fortune to him in the hands of the Irish Monte Cristo.

He coveted it.

Perhaps the reflection that the wealth of this world was very unevenly distributed made the man sad.

Mr. Grimes kept an eye on him.

"I wonder if that fellow is up to any mischief?" he thought, but did not speak aloud.

There had been a time in the past when even the environs of Rome were dangerous after dark.

Bandits haunted the mountains within five miles of the Eternal City.

All this had been changed.

During the reign of Victor Emanuel these gentry had been mercilessly hunted, and they were as a general thing more careful now of how they showed themselves.

Still, there were bands of them in the mountains, having their haunts in inaccessible places where the military could not follow.

At length the scene which they wished to visit was reached.

In the silvery moonlight, which bathed it like a misty veil, it was beautiful.

Such ruins are best seen in a half tone light—the garish flame of the day god is too much for their decay.

“What do you think of it, Katy?” asked Redmond, when they had spent some time in viewing the scene from several quarters.

“It is just glorious. I wouldn’t have missed it for a good deal.”

° O’Connor was pleased.

He dearly loved to see her sweet face light up with pleasure.

No sacrifice could have been too great for him to have endured in order to bring joy to the heart of his beloved wife.

“Shall we return?”

“Wait. There is one point the signora has not seen. It is glorious, grand, superb, the finest view of all in this moonlight.”

So said the courier.

“Then bring us to that point, Gerald. The night air is getting chilly. I fancy the breeze draws from the direction of the marsh, and it cannot be good to be out here long.”

“Si, signor. Come, we will proceed thither without delay, and all will agree that I have not over-rated the scenery a particle.”

When, after some little difficulty, they reached the point for which he aimed, it was evident that Gerald had indeed reserved the finest vantage grounds for the last.

The view was enchanting.

How easy it was in the romantic moonlight to imagine that ruin peopled with crowds that, during the time when Rome ruled the whole known world, gathered here to witness the terrible conquests in

the arena between the brawny gladiators, who fought to the death.

One could imagine the applause of the fickle multitude, the gay attire of thousands upon thousands, the bull fight, or encounter with wild beasts, and the many strange sights witnessed within these crumbling walls.

Where now were the thronging multitudes that had made these walls echo with their shouts?

Gone!

Yes, ages ago they had crumbled away to dust—scores upon scores of generations had come and gone, and now only these relics remained to tell of vanished glories.

Looking upon this spectacle one feels a strange sensation go over him.

It is as though his spirit has been put into communication with the dead past.

O'Connor and his wife looked for a time in wrapt delight, for never had they seen a picture such as this old lonely ruin, swept by the soft beams of the full moon.

Mr. Grimes was affected, too, though not to the same extent as his companions.

He had a different nature.

All the while he was thinking how nervous their guide appeared to be.

What was the cause of it?

Was he sorry that he must soon quit the employ of so liberal a man?

There was something more than this.

The man acted as though he had been doing something of which he was ashamed.

Mr. Grimes liked to study human nature.

It was his daily pleasure.

He did not pretend to be a mind reader, but from habit he had come to strike pretty near the truth when he bent his energies to it.

It was evident to him now that their guide had a weight on his mind.

He started when spoken to suddenly, and seemed to be listening for some sound.

"Come, let us go," said O'Connor.

"Yes, I am satisfied. Enough is as good as a feast," responded the detective.

Gerald acted strangely.

"Gentlemen, we had better hurry. I saw a figure in the bushes yonder. This place used to be dangerous, though of late——"

He did not finish.

Around them rose a dozen rough figures.

They were in the clutch of the brigands.

CHAPTER VII.

DRAGGED TO THE CATACOMBS.

There could be no doubt about it.

The guide had played them falsely.

While under contract to treat them as under his charge, he had betrayed them into the hands of unscrupulous men, who would not hesitate to hold them until a large ransom was paid, or even put them out of the way.

The brigands of Italy have little feeling, especially for the foreign element.

Mr. Grimes' first impulse was to spring upon the treacherous Gerald, and punish him.

When, however, he turned to do this he found that the other, as if fearful lest something of this nature might come upon him, had made haste to widen the distance between them.

The detective glanced around.

The dozen men had swollen to twenty.

Rough looking fellows they were, indeed, and every man carried a gun, which was leveled at the little party in a threatening fashion.

One who appeared to be the leader stepped forward to address them.

Mr. Grimes uttered an exclamation.

Surely he had seen this man before. Yes, as certain as fate it was the tall beggar who had followed them so persistently, and who had only been chased away by the shots of the detective.

This was a strange thing.

The beggar was a brigand chief.

He looked for victims among the foreigners in the city, well knowing they could better pay a ransom than his countrymen, and that there was not apt to be such a fuss raised over the fact of their sudden disappearance.

"Signor, do you surrender, or shall I order my men to fire?" said the man, in excellent English.

Mr. Grimes looked around.

He saw O'Connor with his arm thrown around his wife, his face set, and the other hand grasping a revolver as if ready to defend her to the last.

It was not a pleasant choice.

One word from the leader, and that score of guns would belch out their contents.

The result must be instant death.

Anything was better than that.

Besides, a chance to escape might present itself in case they became prisoners.

Mr. Grimes decided.

"We surrender."

"It is well, signor."

The leader of the brigands made a gesture, which was evidently well understood by his companions, for half a dozen men at once advanced and seized the two Americans.

Their weapons were quickly confiscated, and then their hands felt the bonds.

A close search was made for valuables.

The anger of the bandits was loud and long, as expressed in a rattling string of oaths, when they found themselves poorly paid for their trouble.

Our friends had been wise enough to leave their valuables behind them.

Thus Katy's diamonds, bought in Paris, and other magnificent jewelry, together with the gentlemen's

gold watches and the large roll of bills O'Connor had sported in the sight of the courier, escaped confiscation, being safe in the house where they lodged.

Still the leader of the brigands did not seem to be badly put out.

"You shall pay ten thousand florins each for ransom before you go free," he said, when he learned how meager was the result of the thorough search instituted by his men.

This was not a pleasant prospect.

It would interfere with their pleasure.

Whom could they look to for help?

Money they had in plenty—it was not that which bothered them, but the lack of a friend to carry it to the brigands.

If Tom Grattan had only arrived.

He was about due.

Mr. Grimes turned to the captain.

"Listen," he said, "we have the money, but no one to send our order to. Let one of us go and fetch it—the lady, if you will, keeping the rest as hostages. Then you can turn us loose."

But the brigand chieftain did not see it that way.

He was suspicious by nature.

Knowing how keen-witted these Yankees were, he believed this was but a trick to deceive him.

He believed that in letting one of them go he lessened his power by one half.

Stupid—of course it was, and the fellow was bound to regret his action in the future, but he could not see far beyond his nose.

"You must think of some one who will pay the ransom to my messenger. I will give you three days to do it, and if at the end of that time you fail, then you shall rot in your cells."

He spoke vindictively.

Mr. Grimes seemed to be the especial object of his hatred.

Perhaps the fellow still heard the mad whistling of the bullets that had accelerated his flight, and knew the source they came from.

He would repay that debt before he was done with the business.

Orders were now given.

The prisoners found themselves in the center of the rough band, which started in the direction of the city, much to their surprise.

Perhaps the brigands of former days had abandoned their dangerous work in the mountains for the more profitable mission of mendicants, only appearing in their original role when the occasion demanded it, like the present.

Cautiously they proceeded.

Scouts were sent in advance.

They kept under shelter whenever it was possible, and in this way entered the outskirts of old Rome, where modern civilization had not as yet intruded among the ancient houses. Here a queer church arose, surrounded by a high wall, covered with vines. Beyond was a ruin of what had once been a fine mansion, but time had dealt mercilessly with it, and now it seemed but the abode of bats and spiders. To the surprise of the prisoners the daring brigands headed toward this lonely pile. It was here, no doubt, they held out. The police powers, lenient to all mendicants, never bothered those who had taken up a residence in the old ruin, so that they lived in peace.

Sure enough, the whole party passed in through a broken arch. A door swung on its rusty hinges, and

admitted them to the interior. Save for the few beams of moonlight that filtered in through the sashless windows, there was not the slightest efforts at illumination. The corners were left in darkness.

It was a weird sight, and our friends, even though their position was desperate, could not help but notice this strange aspect.

Where did the brigands hold forth?

There did not seem to be any evidence of occupancy, not even a pallet greeted the eye.

The floor was of stone.

It had echoed to the tread of warriors in the days of former centuries when Rome, set upon her seven hills, wielded the scepter that swayed the known world.

To the surprise of all, and the profound interest of Obed Grimes, the party came to a halt in the middle of this lofty and in former years grand apartment.

They seemed to gather around a certain spot where a ring fastened to a slab of stone gave evidence of some subterranean passage.

Mr. Grimes' thoughts flew to New York.

Weeks before, just when on the point of sailing on the Anchor Line steamer for the ports of the Mediterranean, these three had had an adventure in an old church, and been shut in a vault under the stone floor, used as a burial place for influential officers of the church.

This made him think of the other adventure.

He only hoped it would end as happily.

At a word from the ragged and yet rather picturesque looking leader, who clung to the national dress, several of the banditti seized upon this stone and raised it up.

All was darkness below.

A lantern was produced—several of them—and by the light of these there came into view a flight of stone steps, covered in places with moss.

Down these they went.

O'Connor assisted his wife, his arms being freed. As yet no insult had been offered to them, though there could be no telling how long this state of affairs would last.

Their captors were a brutal set of men, the scum of the former daring brigands.

That they had treated their prisoners respectfully was more from diplomacy than any feeling of humanity within their bosoms.

At the foot of the steep stairs they found a narrow passage, very like a tunnel.

A musty odor prevailed.

Mr. Grimes knew they were in a serious predicament, and he kept his eyes about him so that if the chance for escape presented itself he would know the way out.

He was not the man to be caught napping when an occasion arose that might be made available by an energetic person.

Along this passage the band pushed.

Looking back, the Yankee detective could not keep from smiling to see the ragged line of dark-hued desperadoes strung out, every other man holding a lantern in his hand.

Bats whirled past their heads.

Where they came from or went to it would be next to impossible to state.

Mr. Grimes had his suspicions.

This was no ordinary passage.

It presently ran into a larger one.

An examination would have revealed the fact that

it had been cut out hundreds and hundreds of years before. Indeed, almost eighteen centuries had passed since the hands of men had performed work in this subterranean place.

Generally it was round.

The stone all around was not hewn.

It looked as though a great vein of sand had passed through a strata of solid rock, branching in places after the manner of the limbs of a tree or the blood vessels in the human body.

In digging this sand out there had been left an excavation that extended miles and miles under and beyond the old city of Rome.

Here, during the persecution of the church, the early Christians had hidden themselves, living and dying among these labyrinthine passages.

Thousands of graves have been found in the walls—graves hollowed out by man, and sealed up when the body was placed therein.

These sepulchers have given to the wonderful and intricate passages the name of catacombs.

In certain chambers thousands of skulls and bones of the early martyrs are gathered.

Few visit Rome, but who descend into the wonderful catacombs.

They go a beaten path and with a guide.

To be lost there might mean death, for one could easily wander about these bewildering passages until overcome by the grim monster.

Marvelous stories have been told of this city beneath a city, tales of horror, too, for these now silent streets once witnessed astounding sights.

Even of late years they have been the theater of more than one violent crime.

Men have committed murder and suicide among

the relics of the dim past, and more than one strange adventure has occurred there.

Mr. Grimes soon made up his mind.

"We intended visiting the underground Rome to-morrow, but these men have anticipated us."

"Then you think——"

"I know we are in the catacombs of Rome. There are several branches, one at least separated from all the rest. Perhaps this is it, and the brigands have made it their headquarters. If we ever escape from it alive we may consider ourselves lucky."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET CHAMBER.

Their situation was really desperate.

The brigands demanded something which they could not see how they might grant.

True, there was money enough, but who could get it for them? There was the proprietor of the house—perhaps, when he learned their predicament, he would be good enough to act as their agent. Would the money concealed by O'Connor in the house cover the price asked?

He did not know how much it was, but realized that it would fall far short.

Thirty thousand florins was a large sum.

To many a man it meant a fortune.

The Irish Monte Cristo could, of course, afford to snap his fingers at such a ransom; it was a mere bagatelle ball compared with the colossal pile he had come into possession of.

With him, however, the only question was how he could secure the amount.

These men were stupid and suspicious.

They would not let Mr. Grimes go in order to secure the ransom demanded.

Perhaps they might have allowed O'Connor to leave, guided by one of their number, provided his wife remained a hostage.

He thought of this.

Only as a last resort would he mention it, for to leave Katy with these men even temporarily would be a great infliction.

The party had reached the chamber where they seemed to hold out.

It marked the end of the passage.

There was but one way of entering and leaving it, so far as Mr. Grimes could see, and this was by the means they had taken in coming.

At one point close to the chamber, the tunnel—it was nothing else—crossed a hole.

A rude bridge formed of a single wide plank served the brigands here.

One by one the prisoners were made to cross this plank, which trembled under their feet.

Pausing on the other side, the leader took a lighted flambeau from one of his men and tossed it into the yawning aperture.

To the surprise of our friends it descended rapidly until it seemed like a mere star.

They did not see it strike.

Was the pit actually bottomless?

They shuddered to think what would be the fate of any wretched being who fell into it.

He would hardly know what hurt him—one wild thrill of agonized fear, a swift descent, and then all would be over.

If that plank were removed it would be impossible to leave the den.

The brigands were at home.

Here they held forth, secure from the law.

What crimes they committed there could be no saying, but from the looks of the crowd it would be easy to believe them capable of almost any violent deed on the calendar.

The leader had a short talk with his prisoners, during which he informed them that here they

were to stay until the ransom was paid, and any attempt at escape would meet with death.

He looked sullen while speaking, and spoke of having committed an indiscretion in having allowed them to see where they were taken.

Mr. Grimes did not forget this fact.

It had a good deal of influence upon their future actions.

Most of the bandits went away again, as though some other business awaited them.

A few remained.

These were the guards.

They carried guns and pistols, and kept a sharp watch on the prisoners.

Our friends were free so far as bonds were concerned, and could walk about anywhere within the bounds of their prison.

Mr. Grimes was bent upon investigating.

He soon made a discovery.

The plank bridge no longer crossed the abyss.

It had been taken up and concealed, whether by the guards or those who had left the place he had no means of knowing.

Of course it would mean a great deal of difference to them, for if it lay on the other side of the chasm they could not hope to escape until the others returned.

He also noticed that the three guards kept together all the time, and watched them closely.

They had a small fire, the smoke of which appeared to drift along and be sucked into certain crevices of the rock above.

Around this they hung, now cooking something, and now singing a peculiar song, possessing little melody but plenty of fierce exclamations.

O'Connor and his wife had seated themselves upon the ground, and when Mr. Grimes joined them he spoke of the discovery he had made.

Their prospect looked gloomy.

Nevertheless O'Connor seemed in a cheerful frame of mind, joking over many things and causing Katy to smile.

The keen-eyed detective read him like a book.

He knew that Redmond was assuming a gayety he was far from feeling.

Why was this so?

He hoped to keep Katy's spirits up.

Presently the two gentlemen sauntered around, presumably to smoke the cigars which their captors had kindly allowed them to retain.

In reality Mr. Grimes wanted to have a little private talk with his employer.

"You seem light-hearted, Mr. O'Connor."

"That is assumed for Katy's sake. You know we Irishmen can laugh and sing even when black misfortune hangs over us. It is the national trait."

"You do not feel that way then?"

"Truth to tell, I am 'plunged in a gulf of deep despair,' as the old hymn has it. I can see no ray of light except I make an arrangement to leave Katy and go for the money under charge of that arch villain the brigand captain."

Mr. Grimes shook his head.

"Useless."

"How so?"

"You heard what that man said about having made a mistake in letting us see the entrance to this branch of the catacombs?"

"Yes—I remember."

"I was watching his face. It was marked by cun-

ning and unscrupulous hate. As sure as I am here, I believe, Mr. O'Connor, that even if you managed to secure the ransom money to-morrow it would not give us liberty."

"Confusion! do you think——"

"I know what I say. That man has made up his mind that we shall not leave here alive."

The Irish Monte Cristo paused in his walk, and looked at his friend in a troubled manner.

"If that is so, we are doomed, unless by some lucky chance we can escape."

"That is it."

"Why not now. The guard is few in number. We may never have a better opportunity."

"Don't be hasty. As long as there seems to be a chance to get the ransom money they will not do us any harm. When the case seems hopeless then we must look out for squalls. Besides, there is another reason why we would be foolish to try and escape now."

"What is that?"

"Look yonder."

The old detective pointed toward the abyss.

"Great powers! the bridge is gone."

"Just so."

"Where do they keep it, on this side or that?"

"I have not discovered as yet."

"Then escape is cut off; we can do nothing, even though we might overcome the guards."

"Patience, sir. Leave it to me. I have cracked harder nuts than this, and unless my native cunning fails me we shall outwit the rascals yet."

"I trust so. I do not think of myself so much as Katy. Poor girl, she has wedded trouble in taking

me. I hope it will not always be so—that the storm will soon give way to fair skies.”

“Hope on, Mr. O’Connor. Once out of this scrape and with those other fiends baffled, we may yet be as happy as the day is long.”

“Do you know, an idea struck me recently. Perhaps I did not tell you, but when we secured the treasures of the old Incas, with the gold we took a small box of peculiar shape, containing some of the oddest jewels you ever saw. I do not know their value, but I imagine they are relics from the old rulers of Peru, and perhaps venerated very highly.”

“I see,” said Mr. Grimes, quickly, “you think that perhaps these men are after this box more than the gold—that a compromise might be effected, and they leave you in peace?”

“Exactly.”

“There may be something in that, O’Connor. We will try and make an arrangement with those thugs if we ever get out of here.”

The time passed slowly.

Katy finally slept.

Her devoted husband watched over her with loving solicitude. As long as she had such a faithful defender near, Katy need fear no danger; but should he be removed, the thought was too terrible to be considered even for a moment.

O’Connor himself dozed at times.

Mr. Grimes slept heavily.

He had a gloomy foreboding that they were destined to see much trouble ahead.

It was the deliberate habit of the cool detective not to cross a bridge until he came to it, that is, he made it a point never to borrow trouble.

When the time came for action it would be found that he had prepared for it.

It was probably well on toward morning when the balance of the band returned.

They had been carrying out some work, but what the nature of it might be none of our friends had the slightest idea.

The leader soon came before them.

"I have changed my mind," he said, calmly.

O'Connor started.

Did the fellow mean that he had determined to put them to death?

"I said thirty thousand florins. I now put the ransom at one hundred thousand."

The fact was he must have discovered the identity of his prisoner, and realized that they could pay the ransom of a prince.

O'Connor smiled.

"I could easily hand you over that amount if I were free to do it. What do you say to letting my wife go for the money?"

The fellow's eyes glittered as they were turned upon Katy's handsome face.

Somehow O'Connor shivered.

He seemed to feel danger in the air for the one he loved better than his life.

"No, we will keep the signora here; she is too good a hostage to let go."

Redmond said no more.

He was afraid lest the captain should propose that he go for the money, which was the last thing he would have desired.

Besides, he remembered what Mr. Grimes had said with reference to their keeping the secret of the catacombs with their lives.

They were given food and water.

Time passed slowly.

Mr. Grimes, however, was busy, and with each passing hour he made some discovery.

He prowled around.

Now and then he stopped to talk with one of the men, having a smattering of Italian, while most of them understood English a little.

It was really comical to witness, and the brigands smiled in spite of their gruffness.

They had an idea Mr. Grimes was a sort of pedagogue, since he was the private secretary of the wealthy American prince, as they termed O'Connor, and believed him harmless.

He assumed an innocent, unsuspecting manner, as if he prowled around through mere curiosity, and yet all the while he was laying up knowledge that would serve him well when the time came for them to make a break for liberty.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TRAIL OF THE FIERY SERPENT.

"I have made a discovery."

Looking up, the Irish Monte Cristo found Mr. Grimes bending over him.

"What is it?"

"The place where the plank is concealed is no longer a mystery to me. Cast your eye in that quarter. Look up about ten feet, and you will see what I refer to."

"Jove! the plank flattened against the roof."

"Exactly."

"How does it get there?"

"There is a peculiar system of ropes and pulleys which allow the plank to be lowered from either side, providing one knows where the ropes are."

"And you do?"

"Yes, I had my eyes open when the men came back, and got an idea, which, by study, I have managed to make out the truth."

"Then the next chance we have we will take advantage of it; isn't that your idea?"

"We must. It would be folly to trust the captain; he has a bad eye."

That was Mr. Grimes' way of putting it.

Remembering the manner in which the captain had looked at Katy, the Irish Monte Cristo was bound to believe this.

How slowly the day passed.

To O'Connor the hours dragged along.

The brigands, knowing they could not escape, allowed them to move around at will in the rocky chamber, and even explore several little passages leading a short distance away, each of which ended abruptly.

Mr. Grimes, in prowling around, had found an old flight of stone stairs.

At the top of these was a massive iron door, rusty and apparently unused for ages.

Perhaps it led into some church or cloister.

Evidently the brigands had never used it.

Mr. Grimes, in his hasty examination, saw that they could put little hope in this quarter.

The rust was heavy upon the solid iron. He tried to shake the door, but it seemed as firm as the solid rock around him.

To all appearances it would take a dynamite bomb to move this door.

Its presence was strange enough, and when Mr. Grimes tried to get some information concerning it from one of the men, the fellow shook his head.

He either would not or could not give an answer to the question.

Night came again.

Our friends had no watches with them, but the captain sported one, borrowed probably from some former unfortunate pilgrim whose bones might possibly be even then resting at the bottom of that unfathomable gulf.

By inquiry they found out the time.

The brigands seemed to have temporarily given up the mendicant business, since they had now gone back to more profitable work.

It became evident that the men were going out again as on the previous night.

Perhaps it was for a carousal.

Three guards were left behind—different men from those of the previous occasion.

Mr. Grimes studied them.

He believed the time was coming for the grand effort at escape.

If they lost this opportunity they would rue it, for the chance might not come again.

For a time they remained quiet.

Katy slept.

O'Connor and his astute friend conversed in low tones, and yet they were careful not to act in any way suspicious.

The guards played cards.

It seemed as though the spirit of gambling had become a regular mania with these sons of Italy, as part of them were always engaged either with cards or playing a national game.

Some hours had passed since the main body of the brigands had gone out.

The time was at hand.

Mr. Grimes had arranged a plan by means of which he believed the three guards would be so demoralized that they could be made prisoners.

In prowling around he had found in one grotto where they kept their ammunition.

He had taken a pound canister of powder.

As he lolled around he had managed to lay this on its side not ten feet from where the three gamblers were engaged with the cards.

A trail of gunpowder ran across to where he and O'Connor sat talking.

The latter awoke his wife, and warned her as to the nature of their plan.

Each of them had a cudgel ready for business.

Mr. Grimes held the stump of a cigar between his teeth, and he now lighted a match and pretended to hold it to this.

Then he deftly brought it into communication with the powder.

There could be but one result.

A flash followed.

Quickly this spurted along the stone floor.

If it met with no impediment or break in the train, it was bound to reach the canister in the space of a few seconds.

As soon as he saw that the match had fired the train, Mr. Grimes threw himself flat upon his face, hugging the floor.

O'Connor and his wife were in a measure protected behind a rock.

The three gamblers sat forming a sort of triangle, close to the fire.

One only faced that way.

He did not see the flash immediately, but as he heard a peculiar puffing sound, looked up from his cards, and saw the fiery serpent trailing over the stone floor of the catacomb chamber.

Horror stricken at the presence of an unknown danger he gave a loud cry, and pointed.

The others, half believing their prisoners were rushing upon them, snatched for their guns, and while in the act of gaining their feet managed to twist their limbs around.

One glimpse they caught of the serpent, and then the fire reached the canister.

Bang!

The report was terrific, in such confined space, and fire brands flew over the three guards in a regular shower.

Such was the concussion that the three men were knocked over.

They were greatly terrified, and hardly knew whether they were dead or living.

"Up and at 'em, guards," sung out the old detective, and the famous words of the British general were never more aptly applied.

O'Connor sprang to his feet.



ATTACKING THE GUARD.

Cudgels in hands, the two tourists leaped toward the demoralized enemy.

Fortunately the lights had escaped going out in the concussion, so they could see dimly through the cloud of white powder smoke.

Each picked out a man.

The guards had not yet recovered from the panic

into which they had been thrown, when they found themselves hotly assailed by those who had erstwhile been considered their prisoners.

They were not given much of a chance to hold their own ground.

O'Connor closed with his man, and began choking him fiercely.

Mr. Grimes whacked a second right and left with his cudgel. In vain the fellow attempted to shield his head by the use of his arms, the blows rained in thick and fast.

Quickly his guard was beaten down, and he rolled over like a log.

Turning upon the third, Mr. Grimes had only time to dodge when a gun was fired.

The bullet cut the air in the exact spot where the old detective had been.

Lucky, indeed, it was for him that he had made that leap aside.

Seeing that he had missed, the Italian became panic stricken, and dropping his gun he ran like a frightened deer.

The powder smoke hung over the scene.

In his delirium of terror the wretch did not apparently understand what new danger lay in his path.

He had taken it for granted that the plank was over the chasm, and meant to flee in that direction to escape his dreaded enemy.

Obed Grimes gave a shout of warning, but the man did not heed it, as he was in a condition to construe every sound into a war cry.

He rushed on, half looking behind him, and thrust out his foot to place it on the plank.

It was not there.

He realized his peril.

One great effort he made to recover his equilibrium, but it was too late.

He had lost his balance, and slipped out of sight, clutching wildly at the rock, and uttering a shriek like the cry of a lost soul.

Mr. Grimes crept forward, and looked down, hoping to see the man hanging there, and be able to pull him out, but it was not so.

He had gone to his death in the awful pit, and would never be seen again.

Shuddering, the Yankee drew back.

By this time O'Connor had succeeded in reducing his man to a condition where he could no longer do any mischief.

The detective picked up a piece of rope, and tossed it over to Redmond, who knew what it was intended for without being told.

Meantime Mr. Grimes turned his attention to the man he had been engaged with.

This fellow was just getting up, as he recovered in a measure from the blows.

Mr. Grimes pounced upon him as a cat might a mouse.

The man made a feeble resistance, but it ended in his being overcome, and presently he was bound hand and foot.

Victory!

It had been well earned, and the two men could not help but feel a thrill of satisfaction, as, panting heavily after their exertions they surveyed the field of which they were masters.

Of course this was not the end; both of them knew they must run further risks before freedom could be gained.

"Come, let us arm ourselves. These men left to

guard us, fortunately carry the weapons we owned—our revolvers. Pick up that gun, sir, and a knife. We may meet with some of the rogues in the passage, and have another fight before the game is played out.”

Katy had witnessed this scene with something of alarm, for the one she loved was an actor in it, and might receive an injury.

At the successful termination of the affair she came to his assistance, even helping him to secure the rope about his prisoner.

“We must lose no time here, Mr. O’Connor.”

“Is there anything more to be done?”

“I do not think so. The sooner we breathe fresh air again the better I shall be pleased.”

“Ditto.”

“Suppose then we lower the bridge.”

“Let us examine into it.”

Advancing, they found the hidden rope.

It was found that by unloosening it the heavy plank could be lowered until it rested across the abyss, which was done.

The rope was left untied, and if once the plank slipped from the edge, it would drop below, the rope passing through the blocks at the end.

“Come, go and get your wife, and——”

“Hark! what is that?”

Both men listened.

Along the rocky corridor came the sound of men’s voices, singing and calling.

Mr. Grimes’ face grew set and determined, while his eyes assumed a hard expression—he had the appearance of a desperate man at bay.

“Our escape is cut off, the brigands are coming along the passage; it is fight to the last now.”

CHAPTER X.

AN UNDERGROUND BOMBARDMENT.

Thus, in a breath as it was, their hopes had been suddenly shattered.

Had they been granted half an hour more time, in all probability they would have made a successful escape from the bandits' den.

Fortunately both of them were men of action.

Even such a catastrophe as this was not apt to stun them by its overwhelming nature.

"Place Katy where she will be safe in case they fire at us," said Mr. Grimes.

The two men sprang in opposite directions, one to look after his wife, and the other to prevent the enemy from crossing the bridge.

Already loud cries rang along the vaulted passage.

The onrushing brigands had discovered how matters stood, and were intent upon reaching the plank bridge to cross over.

Once they were among our friends, no matter how bravely or desperately the latter fought, they were bound to be overwhelmed by numbers.

Mr. Grimes realized this fact.

He had made up his mind that not one of the rascals should cross over, if he had to die at his post like Leonidas at Thermopylæ.

Shots sounded.

Bullets flew about the heroic man, but Heaven was kind, and none touched him.

He had reached the bridge.

Bending down he caught the end of the heavy plank, pushing it nearer the edge.

The leading brigand sprang upon the bridge at this instant, holding a naked knife in his hand, his fierce eyes glued upon the man at whom he was rushing like a whirlwind.

Mr. Grimes deliberately made another violent effort, and the plank slipped from the edge.

There was a rattling of blocks, a whirring sound of flying ropes, cries and oaths.

The wretch on the plank had been about the middle when this occurred.

Realizing the full nature of his terrible position he had endeavored by a tremendous jump to reach solid rock.

The distance was not over eight feet, and could have been overcome easily under ordinary circumstances, but the sinking of the plank caused his footing to be insecure, so that he came against the rocky wall, and went down with the plank.

Mr. Grimes had thus succeeded in presenting the abyss between their little force and the enemy opposed to them.

His next endeavor was to save himself from the vengeance of the bandits.

As good luck would have it, the men were so thunderstruck at the tragic fate of their daring companion that they neglected to take summary vengeance upon the enemy.

The pretended private secretary was in plain view, at the time, and might have been riddled with leaden hail, but, taking advantage of this momentary respite, he sprang toward the shelter of the rocks.

Behind these he leaped just in time to escape the vengeful bullets sent after him.

Temporarily they were safe.

The plank had gone to the bottom of the black gulf, so there was no means by which their foes could pass over to give them trouble.

A new bridge could doubtless be made, but it would take time.

Meanwhile our friends had a chance to escape, if they could but find some rear exit.

The great iron door was on the detective's mind, but he knew it would resist all the ordinary tricks put into practice by safe openers.

The success of the little artifice by means of which the three guards had been demoralized was fresh in his mind.

It caused him to think of a plan which could be tried upon the iron door.

Returning to O'Connor he found him in the act of firing his gun.

The enemy had conceived a daring plan by means of which they might land men across the abyss in quick rotation.

One of them held the rope that was fastened above, near the middle of the chasm.

He seemed about to run forward with it, and with a swing land on the other side, the rope acting the part of the pendulum.

Should this be successful, they must shoot him down, and any others who followed.

O'Connor saw how the game could be blocked.

He took aim, not at a man, but the rope near the top, where it was fastened.

With the report of the gun the rope fell.

It was a remarkably clever shot, and Mr. Grimes congratulated the other on it.

For the present they had no more to worry about.

The brigands retired from their exposed position near the edge of the gulf, and took up temporary quarters near by.

They seemed to be in consultation.

Perhaps they were devising plans whereby the energetic enemy might be circumvented.

"Looks to me like a strike—a meeting of the strikers to consult," said O'Connor.

"Say rather a lock-out," returned Mr. Grimes.

More than once a member of the bandit league would come down near the opening and shake a dirty fist at the camp beyond.

The jargon he uttered they did not understand, and as for shooting him, they were not inclined that way just at present.

One fellow became so abusive and vulgar that O'Connor raised his gun.

The man was just shaking a knife above his head when Redmond let drive, and as the bullet struck the steel the weapon flew far away.

As for the fellow himself, his grandiloquent manner vanished immediately.

Perhaps he imagined he was mortally wounded from the thrill his nerves had received.

At any rate, he bellowed lustily, and ran for the spot where his noisy comrades were grouped, chattering like an assemblage of magpies.

After that they were a little more careful as to how they approached the exposed spot.

"Look! they are bringing boards!"

It was even so.

Like an army halting before a river, the brigands must bridge the chasm.

In place of pontoons they had secured some boards which might answer the purpose.

Mr. Grimes was in for keeps now, as he understood that once the gulf which separated them from their foes was bridged over, the game would be in a desperate condition for them.

"I'm sorry, but we'll have to shoot the poor devils down as fast as they come on."

O'Connor did not reply.

He felt that he was defending his wife, and even if a score of these wretches had to die it was better than that a hair of her head be injured.

He was ready.

Mr. Grimes had been delighted with the extraordinary marksmanship exhibited by the Irish Monte Cristo—he was something of a shot himself, but he could not hold a candle to the sort of exhibition O'Connor had given.

"Try wounding 'em first. They have little grit, and even a flesh wound takes them out of the fight. Some men it would inflame to a dare-devil pitch, but with such chaps courage goes with the first drop of blood."

"Very good, sir."

The men bearing the boards now advanced with a rush and a mighty shout, others following closely behind.

"Take the tall chap, Redmond. I'll look after the other on his left."

Hardly had Mr. Grimes spoken than the two guns sounded, almost as one.

Those at whom they were aimed dropped the boards and beat a hasty retreat.

A third gun sounded close by.

Mr. Grimes turned his head, and saw the Irish Monte Cristo's wife with a gun in her hands.

Her aim had been good, for one of the fellows limped away.

"Bless her brave heart, she's a heroine if ever there lived one," thought the detective.

These disastrous shots had completely broken up the seemingly valiant attack.

The Italians fled, leaving the boards where they had fallen when the shots came.

Another assault had been repulsed.

Our friends loaded up again.

Redmond O'Connor was delighted to discover what a brave little woman his wife was, and she blushed under the admiration he lavished upon her.

What would the enemy do next?

This question was of importance to them, but there was another even greater.

What would they do?

Mr. Grimes left O'Connor on guard, while he went off upon some mission.

Taking a lantern he went into the grotto, the end of which was barred by the iron door at the top of the little flight of stone stairs.

He examined this door more critically than on the former occasion.

It was apparently solid.

Mr. Grimes made one point when he discovered that it opened the other way.

He went back and forward several times.

Once he carried quite a large canister.

It contained powder.

Whatever he was up to he went about his prepara-

tions with a degree of nonchalance that was always a part of his character.

Working away industriously he managed to build up a barrier in front of the door.

When all had been arranged to his complete satisfaction he took a smaller flask of powder and began to make a trail out of the small grotto.

Finally he rejoined the others.

The enemy were up to something, but Redmond had not fully guessed its nature.

"I imagine they are building a bomb proof."

"Gracious! what for?"

"To shield them as they advance."

"I see. It will not work though."

"Why not?"

"Well, I hope we shall not be here by the time they get the battery ready."

O'Connor looked at him eagerly.

"Have you found an opening?"

"Not yet, but I have a chance for one."

"I fail to understand."

"You remember the iron door?"

"Yes."

"I have arranged a battering ram in front of it that I think will burst it open."

"Ah! I begin to comprehend. You were laying a trail when I saw you approach."

"Exactly. That other explosion did us a good turn, and I've an idea we can turn another to a good account. Here is the train just at my hand. For luck I would like your brave wife to fire it."

"Give me the match."

"Wait. The explosion will be severe. Every light will be extinguished by the concussion of air, so we must take this lantern and wrap it in an old

coat. Then all must lie flat. I do not think any piece of flying stone could by any possibility reach us here."

"Tell me when to set it off."

Mr. Grimes made a few preparations.

"Ready now."

Katy struck the match and held it.

"Touch it off, Madame Monte Cristo."

Smiling, she applied the match to the powder.

As before, a fiery serpent began to trail along the rocky floor, now creeping, anon rushing with impetuous speed, until it vanished in the little passage whence Mr. Grimes had issued.

"Crouch low, friends."

His words were drowned in a flashing roar that seemed to shake the solid rock, and made a deafening concussion in the confined space.

Shouts of terror arose from the brigands, who imagined they were to be buried alive.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST PILGRIMS.

For a minute or two it seemed as though there was danger of such a thing occurring, the quivering rocks feeling ready to cave in on the daring mortals who had ventured to penetrate the mysterious passages underground.

Then the effect passed away.

What was the result?

Mr. Grimes produced the lantern from under the old garment in triumph.

It was the only one that had survived the shock. Darkness complete and overpowering had come upon the scene, when that awful explosion occurred.

"I will go forward."

As he spoke Mr. Grimes made toward the spot where the door had been.

Monte Cristo and his bride followed.

When they reached the place the effects of the explosion were seen on every hand.

The white smoke still hung about like a curtain, as if loth to leave the spot.

Pieces of rock lay around.

One could easily see at a glance that some powerful motor had been at work.

As for the door, it hung upon one hinge—a great iron arrangement forged during the middle ages, no doubt—and had the appearance of a complete wreck.

"Well done," muttered the detective, as with considerable satisfaction he viewed his work.

"Remarkably close figuring, sir."

"Ah! are you there, Mr. O'Connor. Yes, a pound more or less of powder would have been out of the way. More might have brought the roof down on us, less could not have accomplished the work as I wanted it."

"The way is now clear?"

"Yes. Lend a hand here. See, we can push the door aside, and enter the passage. Perhaps it can even be shoved close again."

"Shall we go on?"

"Not just yet. Let us consider. There is no immediate danger from our foes. We are about to take a step which cannot be undone, therefore it would be unwise to go into this undertaking with our eyes shut."

"Exactly so."

"These catacombs are dreary passages, and there is no telling how long we may have to wander about there."

"What you say is true."

"Then let us go prepared. Take a little food along, also what lanterns we can find, for I can conceive of no greater agony than being left in the dark in these passages."

The thought was enough.

Monte Cristo shivered.

"Anything but that," he said, with a side glance at Katy, who had covered her face with her hands at mention of the possibility.

They set about carrying out the suggestions of the detective, and while Mr. Grimes collected several lanterns, together with a bottle or two of oil, Redmond and his wife procured from the rude larder of the brigands enough food to do them several meals at least.

"Are we ready now?" he asked.

"Wait."

Mr. Grimes picked up a ball of twine and a piece of white chalk.

"We may have need of these."

The Irish Monte Cristo could not see in what manner they were to come in, but had faith in his companion's sagacity.

All was now ready.

A last observation was taken in the quarter where the brigands were.

They had managed to rebuild the fire with which they lighted up the interior, and seemed to be chattering over the recent strange event like a convention of sandhill cranes.

As yet they showed no signs of making another attempt to bridge the chasm.

Having arranged everything to their complete satisfaction, the little party moved forward.

Having passed the broken iron door, they made an effort to restore it to the perpendicular again.

The result was something of a success, although it would not withstand much rough treatment.

They were now embarked upon an enterprise, the outcome of which no man could predict with anything like certainty.

It had been their only hope.

They were given no choice in the matter.

When they had gone a hundred paces the leader paused and looked around him.

"There can be no doubt, friends, but that we are now lost in the regular catacombs. I do not know the extent of these passages—no one does. There is a beaten route which the guides take in bringing their parties in here, but even they do not dare enter

many of the side galleries that have never been explored."

"Still, in wandering around we stand a chance of meeting one of these parties."

"Yes, or of finding the main gallery that will lead us to an outlet."

This was some satisfaction at least.

They now had a fighting chance, while before, in the power of the brigands, there had been no show for them whatever.

How gloomy it was.

On either side the interminable walls of stone, arching overhead into a roof.

Suddenly they came to where a passage crossed the one they followed.

Which should they take?"

There seemed no choice.

Mr. Grimes having made his choice took the piece of chalk and marked an arrow on the side of the passage just beyond the corner.

Under this he put a figure 1.

It might be a useful fact later on to know that this was the first passage they had taken.

Again they advanced.

Suddenly Mr. Grimes uttered an exclamation. O'Connor glanced hurriedly at him.

"What is wrong?"

"It's too bad I forgot it."

"I don't understand."

"There was one duty neglected."

"Indeed."

"We tied those rascals' hands and feet, but we forgot to put a muzzle on their voices. They have, no doubt, ere this communicated with their friends across the chasm, and told them of our departure."

"Sure enough. Too bad, indeed. Where were my wits that I did not think of that same thing?"

"Wool-gathering, like my own, I reckon. Never mind, the thing has been done now, and I believe in the old saying that there's no use in crying over spilt milk."

"Probably they know just as little about the interior of the catacombs as we do, and if they try to follow will get into trouble."

"True, it seems as if they might leave us alone if they know what is best for them."

"Besides, I made sure to take or destroy every lantern I could find, so they would think twice before venturing into these depths without the proper means of seeing."

"The guides use torches, do they not?"

"That is a distinction with a difference. They are on regular beaten tracks of travels. Should such an accident occur, all they would have to do would be to remain quiet until another party came along. They have regular hours during the day for entering."

"I trust we may be fortunate enough to strike that regular passage."

"Amen."

Again they moved forward.

It promised to be monotonous work.

The passage they followed curved this way and that, following the eccentric vein of sand.

At last they came to a place where there was a fork such as they had seen before.

"This looks rather familiar to me, Mr. Grimes," said O'Connor, in bewilderment.

"Ditto. Suppose you stand where you are while I look around us."

In another minute he uttered an exclamation.

"I thought so. Here is the arrow with the figure I placed beneath it."

"Then we have made a complete circuit."

"We have done nothing less."

"Let us try the other passage."

"Wait until I mark it."

They entered the other passage.

In a certain length of time they rounded up at the same point again.

There was one more chance.

This time they went on, and soon realized that the peculiar turn had been left behind.

Other troubles came.

The passage ascended and descended.

In places it grew so narrow that they had to drop on their hands and knees and crawl, with their hearts in their throats, so to speak, for fear lest it should close entirely.

Such a catastrophe was luckily avoided.

Anon the gallery would widen out and assume grander proportions.

Later on they found themselves in what appeared to be a labyrinth of passages.

Mr. Grimes became worried.

He saw that mistakes now were apt to prove costly to the fugitive wanderers.

They might walk around in this intricate maze for hours, days—yes, weeks, and not find a way out unless some specific plan was adopted in the start which would be carried out.

So, before plunging onward, the detective halted, both to rest Katy, who showed signs of weariness, and at the same time decide what should be their settled plan of action.

He realized that the situation was grave, and yet for the sake of encouraging his friends, the good man put on a smiling face.

Under ordinary circumstances he was grim and stoical, rarely laughing.

Now, however, he seemed quite merry.

Such a man is a friend indeed.

It was decided to keep always beating to the right, as the detective believed such a course would eventually bring them out.

He believed in system.

Veteran gamblers are always looking for a system which, followed exactly, even when affairs look dark, is bound to win finally.

So in this case he believed that systematic movement was the only thing that would carry them out of this labyrinth.

Katy kept up bravely.

She did not want to let her protectors see how utterly worn out she was.

The oppression upon her mind was doubtless more to blame for this state of affairs than any physical exertion she had made.

Truly, she had endured much.

But for the fact that her husband was with her, she could never have gone through half of this agony.

Their future was very uncertain.

Who could say whether they would leave their bones in the catacombs, or find a way to reach the outer world.

Forward.

The galleries seemed interminable.

They crossed and recrossed in bewildering mazes,

and Mr. Grimes was kept busy marking with his chalk on the wall.

He watched Katy on the sly.

His keen eye caught signs that even her husband failed to see.

It must come.

There was no use in deceiving themselves longer—they were hopelessly lost.

“We must stop here, O’Connor.”

“It might be best. I fear Katy——”

“Catch her, man—she faints.”

Sure enough O’Connor had a dead weight in his arms. Katy had held out as long as she could, but the effort had been too much.

She must have rest, it might be hours ere she could again advance.

CHAPTER XII.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAMBER OF SKULLS.

A little water sprinkled upon the face of Monte Cristo's wife brought her to.

She smiled in a wan way.

"I am ashamed of giving up so weakly, but indeed I could not help it. A mist came before my eyes, and then all grew dark. I thought you had extinguished the lantern."

Both men protested vigorously that she had stood the fatigue and anxiety nobly, and that few of her sex could have done as well.

Mr. Grimes was busy thinking.

He realized that it would be hours before the young woman would be in any condition to advance again, and time was valuable.

Something must be done.

They sat there talking for a time, Katy pillowing her head on her husband's shoulder.

At length the detective noticed that her eyes were shut—she slept.

Now he could broach his scheme.

"O'Connor, what would you say if I proposed leaving you and pushing on? I might find a way out, and bring you assistance."

The Irish Monte Cristo took his hand, which he pressed warmly.

"Whatever you think best we will do. I have the utmost confidence in your good judgment, Mr. Grimes."

"I shall mark my course at every turn, so if you

should desire to follow slowly after a time you can do so."

"Go then, and Heaven guide you."

The detective made his preparations.

They were simple enough.

He took a small portion of the food, and one of the lanterns, together with a bottle of water and one of oil for his light.

Then he was ready.

He pressed O'Connor's hand, gave one last look into Katy's fair face, and then turning, strode down the gallery.

Many strange things would happen ere these friends came together again.

Mr. Grimes knew not the meaning of the word "fatigue"—he could tramp all day and be quite fresh at the end.

He knew the uncertain task he had before him, and pursued his way resolutely, determined to accomplish the duty if it lay in the power of human being to do it.

He put things out of his mind that brought unpleasant thoughts.

There was no change.

The same bewildering maze of passages kept before him, and he continued to push to the right, believing in his system.

Nor did he forget to leave the chalk mark as he went along, to guide his friend should the other attempt to follow him.

Time passed on.

More than once he came upon his own marks, and changed them.

Thus, any one coming after would be taken over a much shorter route than his own.

He considered that he must have tramped miles since passing the shattered iron door.

It seemed incredible that one could go so far and yet not strike the beaten path of travel.

While he was following a narrow passage it suddenly debouched into a chamber.

No sooner had the detective entered it than he gave a low cry of horror.

It was a chamber of death.

Human bones were fastened to the walls in every conceivable design. A pyramid of human skulls had been artistically built in the middle of the apartment. It formed an arch. One could walk under it.

There were the remains of hundreds, perhaps thousands of the early Christians who had sought shelter in the passages dug by slave labor, when the rulers of Rome persecuted the church.

Looking at these mementoes of the past, the old detective could not but think of the trials that beset true believers in those days.

Well had sturdy old Paul declared :

“They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword ; they wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy—they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”

Here had they died, and their bones, kept by the peculiar dry air of the subterranean passages under Rome, remain to this day a monument of their heroic fidelity to the truth.

As he gazed upon the scene the detective naturally felt something of awe creep over him.

It was strange to be in the presence of the dead—

to look upon these relics of the centuries that had gone long ago.

As he walked around his eyes suddenly rested upon a sight that caused a new sensation to creep over him.

Among the bones he saw a complete skeleton.

Tatters of clothing still clung to it.

Mr. Grimes shuddered.

He realized that this was undoubtedly the mortal remains of some wretched man who, years before, had become lost in the labyrinth of passages, and wandered into this sepulcher to die, leaving his bones along with those which had lain here for centuries.

Would such a fate be his?

What of the devoted couple left behind?

Bending still closer he saw something clutched tightly in the bony hand of the figure.

It was a piece of paper or cardboard.

Mr. Grimes took it.

He saw writing there, pale, and yet evidently done with a sharp-pointed stick, thrust in red fluid.

It was blood.

He read the message of the dead:

“IN THE CATACOMBS, Sept., 1883.

“My name is Richard Hillyer, of Bristol, England.

“I foolishly entered this desolate region without a guide, and must pay for my temerity with my life. Heaven alone knows how long I have been wandering here—my head grows dizzy at the thought, and my legs are swollen with walking round and round. Four different times I have reached this room of the dead. It shall be my burial place. I can go no further. I am starving for a drink of water. I fear my brain must soon give way. If this is ever found will the bearer kindly send it, with particulars of the finding of my body, to Mrs. Richard Hillyer, Bristol,

and let it assure her that in this, my hour of doom,
I forget and forgive all the differences that drove
me from my home.

“Signed,

RICHARD HILLYER.”

And there he had died.

Mr. Grimes reverently put the card into his pocket.

Something flashing on the skeleton hand attracted
his attention, and he saw it was a magnificent dia-
mond ring, with a stone at least four carats in size.

He reverently removed it.

Inside he saw an inscription:

“From Rachel to Richard, Dec. 25, 1880.”

“She will be glad to receive this if living. Here
is his watch, too. I will keep them for her.”

He soon turned away.

The sight was anything but pleasant to the man
threatened with the same fate.

If Richard Hillyer had left this chamber of the
skulls four times, and on every occasion brought up
there again, what chance was before him now?

And yet he was reasonably sure that there must
be an opening somewhere.

Mr. Grimes walked all around the place.

He surveyed each passage-way closely.

That wonderful intelligence of his caused him to
have a bright thought.

If there was a single passage leading to this cham-
ber it must have been trodden by thousands and tens
of thousands in those days of old.

Water, constantly dripping, will wear away a
stone.

The rock was not like flint or granite.

Surely all this movement for years must have left
its marks upon the surface.

He got down at each passage and examined.

Sure enough, he came to one which was not so wide as some of the others, but the stone flooring was undoubtedly worn by shuffling feet.

Mr. Grimes was pleased.

If he could only follow this to the end.

He went about it quickly.

For the time being he forgot to use his chalk.

It was a mistake he deeply regretted later on.

The trail was plain for a time.

He followed it with the pertinacity of a hound.

Then perhaps a strata of harder rock was struck, for he could not see the wearing away.

Still he went on.

Turning from one passage to another, he once more marked the corners.

It began to daze him.

He was weary, both brain and body.

If this thing was to keep up much longer he feared that he would be reduced to the condition of poor Richard Hillyer.

True, he had meat and drink still, but the many hours he had passed without proper rest, and breathing the musty air that pervaded these strange galleries under Rome, had an effect upon him.

Slowly but steadily he was losing strength, and even his determined mind had begun to feel creeping on that terrible dizziness which assails those who are lost a long time under the earth, caused, no doubt, by poisonous gases they inhale.

What would be the end?

He several times found it necessary to sit down and rest himself.

Never, in all his experience had the detective gone through such a spell as this.

Hours had elapsed since his parting with Monte Cristo and his wife.

He did not know that he was any closer to the goal he sought.

All was blackness in front.

Once in a while something would happen to arouse his hopes.

Every time it had been only to have them sink again into gloom.

Sturdily he pushed on.

He had gone five miles to accomplish one.

This was not all.

In places he had to lower himself at a point where the passage made a sudden descent, the old time ladders used having long since rotted away and vanished utterly.

Then again he had to climb other places.

Difficulties seemed to increase.

Any ordinary man would have been driven distracted by the impotence of all human effort, and perhaps lain down to die.

Mr. Grimes had not yet reached that point.

He surmounted these difficulties one by one.

His manner could only be likened to the bull dog, which, once his grip is fastened upon an object, holds on to the death.

Until he fell, Mr. Grimes would push on.

His motto was before him; it seemed, in blazing letters, spurring him on.

"Nil desperandum."

Again a slight hope came, but he had been deceived so often that he would not let it gain too strong a hold on him.

The passage he followed had debouched into a

broad one, and there was every appearance that this had been well trodden.

It was almost pitiful to see the strong man pick up the burned stub of a torch, and fasten his eyes eagerly upon it.

To him it meant much.

Human beings had passed this way, avoiding the many passages around as though they were pits of destruction, as indeed they had proved to be in the case of at least one wretched being.

Staggering along this, Mr. Grimes suddenly became aware that there was a light far ahead.

He hid his own lantern in the folds of his coat, and then strained his bloodshot eyes eagerly.

“Heaven be praised—saved at last!”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRANGE HAND OF FATE.

The parties advanced.

A new fear had arisen in the mind of the detective; could it be possible that these were some of the brigands searching the passages?

Well, he could die fighting, and that was much more to his taste than the fate that had overtaken the poor wretch whose remains lay in the chamber of skulls.

First of all he concealed his lantern.

He carried one of the revolvers—the guns had long since been thrown away because they were so cumbersome to the weary pilgrims.

Taking up a position behind a rock he waited.

Hope fought with uncertainty in his breast.

Now one and then another was on top.

Presently he was enabled to see that there were only four persons in the party.

Those in the lead, bearing lighted torches and other burdens, were doubtless the guides.

Behind them came a young boy and a lady.

The latter was dressed in black—she made the detective think of a nun.

It mattered not who they were.

He was saved.

Joy unspeakable.

In this moment of transport, be it to his eternal credit that his first thought was of the two friends he had left far behind.

The reaction was too much.

As the tourists approached, Mr. Grimes moved toward them, holding out his hands.

The guides recoiled with exclamations of fear, believing him to be a spirit.

"Stand your ground; don't you see, cowards, it is only a man like yourselves, some poor devil, perhaps, who has been lost in this place."

The boy's resolute bearing awed the guides.

Mr. Grimes came up.

"What you say is true. I have been wandering about here for hours, and have two friends, a gentleman and his wife, miles back in there. We must go to their rescue at once."

"But you are in no condition."

"That does not matter. A load is taken from my mind, and I feel——"

He did not finish the sentence, falling down like a log in front of the sad-faced lady.

For the first time in his life Obed Grimes had fainted.

When he again opened his eyes he looked around him in astonishment.

He lay upon a lounge.

The apartment was evidently a private parlor in a hotel in Rome.

Mr. Grimes was bewildered.

He could not tell just then whether he was in Africa or New Zealand.

Not a familiar object met his eye to bring back the flood of memory.

While he was yet blinking, as the sunlight dazzled his eyes somewhat, a woman's skirts rustled, and a lady in black bent over him.

"You have recovered, sir, thank Heaven."

At sight of her, it all rushed upon his mind.

He covered his face with his hands.

A groan broke from his lips.

"You are saved, good sir. This is a room in a hotel near the entrance to the catacombs. We had you carried here."

"Saved, but they are lost," he groaned.



"SAVED, BUT THEY ARE LOST!" HE GROANED.

"You think of your friends?"

"Yes."

"Ah! there are many who have gone into those black mazes never to come out."

She sighed as she spoke.

Mr. Grimes developed a sudden energy.

"But I will not leave them to perish. Money shall

flow like water. I will have a hundred guides searching every corner of that infernal underground wilderness. They must be found."

The lady put her hand on him to quiet his furious enthusiasm.

"I respect your grief, and am sorry that I cannot bid you hope, but hours have passed since you were found—it is near evening now. The friends you mourn may not have survived the odors of those horrible passages."

"No, no, say not so. They had food, water, light. Both were young and enthusiastic. Love alone would prolong their existence. I must lose no more time, but gather guides to penetrate the mysteries of that underground city, and find the brave Monte Cristo and his lovely wife."

He was about to arise, when for the second time she gently checked him.

"Grant me a few minutes. First, friends of yours were here inquiring for you."

"Friends—I have none in Rome."

"The first one was a broad-shouldered giant, a man of laughing eye and yellow hair. I should say he was an Irishman—his name was Grattan."

"Ah! he has arrived then. What lucky chance sent him here?"

"He was stopping at the hotel, and saw you carried in by our guides."

"Where is he now?"

"My son Richard told him how we had found you, and what you had said regarding others lost in the catacombs. He immediately rushed off to procure guides, and begin the search for them."

"Useless—useless. I alone possess the clew that leads to their whereabouts."

"So I supposed, but he was like wild-fire—these impulsive Irishmen generally act so."

"Is this all, madam?"

"No, hardly had he gone when others came and inquired about you. They seemed to know your name, and when they heard about those you had left behind they, too, hurried away. I presumed they went for guides."

Mr. Grimes looked around.

"What were they like—how many?"

"Three of them came in here, but Richard said there was another outside. They looked like brothers, and I judged them to be foreigners, for their skin was brown and their hair black as a Spaniard's."

What mockery of fate was this?

Why should these men of blood discover him at the time when he was helpless and unable to throw them off the trail?

It was cruel.

Still, he smiled grimly as he reflected that they, too, would be unable to accomplish anything in the mazes of the catacombs. He alone held the clews to lead one to Monte Cristo.

"Now, madam, you will let me go?"

"I intend accompanying you, sir, with my son and our faithful guides."

Mr. Grimes looked uneasy.

He did not understand what this meant.

"The journey will be a hard one, madam. We may even encounter all manner of dangers."

"I can stand them, sir. There is a powerful motive that urges me on. My son and I have not entered the catacombs of Rome through the mere curiosity

that urges so many on. We had a sacred mission to perform."

Mr. Grimes was too much taken up with his own troubles just then to pay much heed to those of any one else.

He arose.

Suddenly he clapped his hand to his side, and turned pale, as he noted the absence of something.

"Madam, do you know whether anything was taken from my person by your guides?"

"I had them look to see if we could find a clew to your identity. Are these the things you miss?" and she pointed to the table.

There he saw the diamond ring and watch which he had taken from the skeleton.

"Those are the articles. I took them from the remains of a poor wretch who had doubtless been lost there years ago."

The lady in black covered her eyes with her hands, and sank into a chair.

At this the boy strode forward.

Mr. Grimes began to see there was the hand of fate in this thing after all.

The young fellow was a bright-faced lad, with a clear eye, and Mr. Grimes liked him.

"What does this mean, young man?"

"Just this, sir. My father disappeared some years ago, and we could get no trace of him until lately, when an acquaintance described how he met him in Rome, just about to do a rash act, such as only an obstinate Englishman would do—enter the catacombs without a guide. We came here, and learned that he had never been known to come out again. Imagine my mother's overwhelming amazement when we found you carried his watch and ring upon

your person. Tell us what you know of this matter, I beg."

"Then you are Richard Hillyer's son?"

"I am."

"The remains of your father have found a tomb in the heart of the catacombs."

"Speak further."

"Held in the bony hand of the skeleton I found this card. It will explain all."

He handed the object to the boy, who eagerly read every line aloud, while the widow sat as if made of stone, her cold lips whispering.

"It is from my Richard—he forgives."

Mr. Grimes was pleased to be rid of the keep-sakes so speedily.

At the same time he did not forget that he had business of his own to attend to.

"You will let me go now, madam. I am a thousand times obliged for your kindness."

"Prove it, then," said the boy.

"How can I?"

"By leading us to the spot where you found these things. It must be on your way."

Mr. Grimes considered.

What young Hillyer had said was true.

It would not take him out of his way should he lead them to the chamber of skulls.

They had come a long way to find all that was mortal of Richard Hillyer, and give his remains burial in the old family plot in England.

Besides, they had possibly saved his life.

He turned around.

"I am quite willing to do so, upon condition that you do not retard my movements. With me human

lives are at stake—your object could await a later and more convenient season.”

“We will not be a drag upon you, depend on it.”

“The way is rough. I shall have to carry a short ladder along. I was thinking of your mother—she is a lady, you know.”

“But an English woman throughout, used to long walks and climbing mountains. We must go with you, sir. Pray say no more.”

She had entirely recovered, and showed surprising agility and determination in preparing for the trip which she was about to undertake.

Mr. Grimes soon found himself ready to enter the underground passages again.

He had swallowed a hasty meal, while the head guide whom he had selected, was gathering a troop of half a dozen men to enter.

He promised them double pay if they obeyed all orders without a murmur.

As the detective looked them over he saw that the men were a poor lot, loud boasters, but cowardly by nature, and superstitious.

The leading guide was the only bold man of the crowd, and upon him the detective believed he could depend in an emergency.

The widow and her little company were on hand, resolute enough, and only anxious to brave the dangers that had been so fatal to their loved one years before.

“Have you the ladder, Antonio?”

“Si, signor,” pointing to one of the men who carried the article in question.

Mr. Grimes looked at his watch.

It was just twenty-three *minutes* past five.

He had found out the time of the others.

Tom Grattan, with a guide, had plunged into the catacombs at three, and the avengers of the Peruvian Incas at just four twenty.

"From an hour to an hour and a half the start, but they do not hold the secret. I do."

Then he waved his hand.

"Forward, Antonio—into the gallery."

CHAPTER XIV.

TO THE RESCUE.

The expedition started under very peculiar circumstances, and yet Mr. Grimes had abundant reasons to hope for success.

The handful of guides, nine in all, counting those belonging to the widow, were apt to know all the side galleries of the labyrinth as well as any living person could be acquainted with them.

Besides they went prepared to navigate the passages, having many balls of twine to be unrolled as they advanced deeper.

Then there were the marks the detective had left on the walls whenever he came to a corner.

Altogether the chances seemed favorable to the accomplishment of the object in view.

One thing Mr. Grimes did not like.

He could not, of course, tell whether it would bring them ill-luck or not.

This was the presence of the thugs.

They had plunged into the catacombs with guides, looking for Redmond O'Connor.

The chances of meeting were *perhaps not* more than one in a thousand.

Still, it might be.

Strange things often occur.

It made the old detective exceedingly uneasy to think of leaving O'Connor there alone to face these men who sought his life.

Such a meeting, under the circumstances, would be romantic and possibly tragic.

O'Connor would fight to the death, as he had his young wife to protect.

Such thoughts as these flashed into the mind of the old detective as he hurried along.

The party was well supplied with torches, and everything that seemed needed.

If they failed it must be from some other cause.

Although Mr. Grimes' thoughts were taken up to a great extent with O'Connor and his perilous situation, he did not neglect other things.

Watching the guides, he soon became convinced that the half dozen whom Antonio had selected were indeed a poor lot.

They seemed to have combined.

Every little while they would have their heads together, as if laying a plan by means of which their employer might be mulcted out of more cash.

Mr. Grimes looked for trouble.

It came.

They had just reached the point where Obed Grimes had issued from the side passage and entered upon the main one.

He knew from several different circumstances that they were near it, and hence kept his eyes on the alert.

Presently he saw his mark—the white arrow.

It was at the mouth of a gallery.

Here then was the actual beginning of their journey, which must cover much ground.

We have seen how the detective wandered over much useless ground in seeking an exit.

As he had remedied this in changing his marks, they would not have to waste such time.

All seemed ready for the forward move when the half dozen guides suddenly rebelled.

They refused to advance.
Signs of excitement could be seen among them.
Antonio stormed and entreated.
Threats and entreaties were alike treated.
The men were sullen.
Mr. Grimes grew impatient.
He called Antonio to him.
"What has gone wrong?"
"My men have rebelled."
"Why?"

"They claim that this passage is known as Satan's Own, on account of the pitfalls and traps that abound in it—that it is taking their lives in their hands to enter."

"But I came through it alone."

"Just so, signor."

"Is this the true reason of their action?"

"No, signor."

"They want more money?"

"Exactly, signor."

"What shall I do, Antonio?"

"Discharge the whole lot. Hire the two guides the signora has; they are good men."

"Can we get on without this rabble?"

Antonio shrugged his shoulders.

"I will carry the ladder, the others can look after the torches. We will do well, fear not."

Mr. Grimes turned upon the six guides, who had been eagerly watching the conversation.

"Clear out!"

He drew his revolver and aimed at the leader, while he waved his hand authoritatively.

Antonio, at the same time, snatched their burdens from them, and quickly gave them to understand that the signor was furious—he had discharged

them, and would have their lives if they were not gone from sight immediately.

This scared the cowards.

They saw they had killed the goose that laid the golden eggs for them.

In their alarm they almost tumbled over each other, such was their eagerness to get away from the furious looking American, who seemed ready to shoot them down in cold blood.

When the recreant guides had departed, those who were left had a little consultation.

The two men hired by the widow were made of good material, and would stick.

Antonio announced to them that if they remained faithful the good signor would give to each a handsome present of ten florins, perhaps twenty, in addition to their pay from the lady.

All seemed well.

A new distribution of the burdens took place.

There were six of them in all now—three guides, just one for each member of the party.

It was quite enough.

The wonder was that they had ever deemed it necessary to have such an unwieldy crowd.

There being nothing else to delay them, the party pushed forward.

Mr. Grimes found that one of the lady's guides could speak good English, and as they advanced he entered into conversation.

He learned several things of interest.

Both Tom Grattan and the leader of the four dark-faced gentlemen had talked with him, and left money in his palm.

To both he had given information, never dream-

ing but what these parties were friends of the signor's, anxious to find the lost ones.

To each in turn he had described the place of meeting, and given directions by means of which they could find the passage out of which the detective had evidently issued.

This news was of importance to him.

He could understand now that these other two parties had not started into the hunt in a haphazard way, but with system.

One thing Mr. Grimes feared.

Could they have noticed the chalk mark?

If so would they take it for granted that he had made it, and look for others?

The thought worried him.

If Tom Grattan came up with O'Connor, his powers of defense would be increased, but those determined men in gray were upon the trail, like so many bloodhounds.

Undoubtedly events were shaping themselves for a very peculiar condition.

It was the toss of a die whether O'Connor might be saved or lost.

To Mr. Grimes it was strange to think that his anxiety did not seem to follow the same channel it had.

Up to now he had been worried lest they might not be able to find the lost ones.

Now he was anxious lest some one else might have found them before.

They made good progress.

The widow showed no signs of fatigue.

As she had declared, she was accustomed to climbing mountains, and going upon long tramps.

Mr. Grimes could not but admire her pertinacity and powers of endurance.

He took into consideration the mission that had brought her here.

It was a sacred one, and had given her additional strength for the effort.

So far the chalk marks upon the wall had not deceived them.

Every step took them nearer.

The guides worked faithfully, and performed their several duties as men should.

Mr. Grimes was constantly on the watch.

He looked for signs of those who had possibly passed along ahead of them.

For some time he discovered none.

Then he found where an attempt had been made to rub out his chalk mark, and which had failed because it would not give way.

This told him something.

The thugs were ahead.

No one else would have dreamed of doing this thing, but they had a motive in view.

Believing the old detective would follow, they had tried to deceive him into making a mistake, and taking the wrong route.

He saw from this that he must keep his eyes open or he might make a mistake.

The luckiest thing he knew of was the fact that the thugs did not possess a piece of chalk, or they would soon have confused him, as did Ali Baba's maid in the Forty Thieves, by marking every door with the same sign.

Before deciding which way to turn, whenever they came to a point where the passages crossed, he studied the situation with great care.

Better to lose a little time than make a mistake that would be serious, indeed.

Strange to say, Mr. Grimes did not seem to feel fatigue.

His short visit to the upper world, the meal he had taken, and, above all, the chance of saving those whom he regarded so highly, appeared to have made a new man out of the old.

He stepped forward as briskly as a man half his age might have done, and there was a determination in his movements that gave him the aspect of a leader among men.

The guides looked upon him with respect.

They could meekly follow such a man, for on this occasion their name of guides was certainly a misnomer, as it was Mr. Grimes who did all the directing, while they came behind to carry the torches and ladder.

Mr. Grimes made new marks in a place where ordinary eyes would not see them.

He did not want to be lost again in this labyrinth, in case the thugs should attempt to play any trick upon them.

They had seen no signs of a light ahead.

This was pretty good evidence that those in advance were well in.

Mr. Grimes saw things in a different light now from what he had done before.

Then he was alone and with the almost certain prospect of death before him.

Now he had company, and could make sure of finding the way out.

The bats that flew around were wild with excitement, for their retreat had never before been thus invaded by men with lights.

They darted about, sometimes by scores, large and small.

Some even made at the torch bearers, and at times quite a lively engagement ensued, the guides whacking away with their torches at the assaulting vermin of the air.

Rats were seen, too.

They found sequestered homes in the dark passages, and no doubt had means of reaching the old Roman houses that stood above.

Unmindful of these things, Obed Grimes led his little band forward.

When they came to one of the places where the gallery took a sudden dip or ascent, the ladder was, of course, brought into play.

Those who had gone before had of necessity no choice but to climb up or clamber down these places, just as Mr. Grimes had done in his first trip over this route.

CHAPTER XV.

A ROYAL BATTLE IN THE CATACOMBS.

Time passed.

They had gone over considerable ground, and Mr. Grimes knew from certain marks he had made on the walls that they must be drawing near the chamber where the bones of the early Christians lay.

This encouraged him.

Soon they would look upon the spot that was a Mecca to the pilgrim widow and her boy.

Nearer and nearer they drew.

"We are there."

As Mr. Grimes spoke he led the way into the Chamber of Horrors.

In another minute the widow and her boy were mingling their tears over all that was mortal of the husband and father.

Mr. Grimes respected their grief, but he had stern business ahead.

"Madam, you will remain here until we return. I trust it will be soon," he said.

She bowed her head without looking up.

Thus the mourning couple were left with their dead.

The real business now began.

They hurried onward.

Even the three guides had in a measure partaken of the excitement of the hour, and labored with a zeal hitherto unknown.

When they came to a descent the ladder was

quickly dropped into position, and then one after another they descended to the new level.

Once more forward. Every step took them nearer the scene.

When he came to think it over, Mr. Grimes did not believe O'Connor could have reached the Chamber of Horrors.

His wife would be unable to ascend and descend these strange places where the level changed so abruptly, besides it was doubtful whether he would make much of an effort, relying upon his companion entirely to rescue them.

Straining his eyes, the man looked for signs ahead that would indicate the presence of human beings in the drift.

His anxiety grew apace.

The closer they drew to the point the more he became worked up over it.

Could it be possible the thugs had done their work?

Would he discover brave O'Connor and his beautiful wife, only locked in the arms of the grim monster who ruled these solitudes—death?

Although he endeavored to banish this thought from his mind he found it well nigh impossible to do so.

It was like a weight resting upon his spirits.

The ghost would not down.

Hark!

A peculiar booming sound came to their ears.

It was like thunder.

Mr. Grimes shut his teeth hard together, while fire seemed to flash from his eyes.

He knew full well that it was not thunder.

Powder exploded in a confined space would cause just such a booming report.

Some one had fired a shot.

Knowing what lay ahead, the detective could easily guess what was up.

O'Connor was armed with a revolver, and he was now defending himself against enemies.

Who these latter were remained a matter of some speculation, but the choice lay between two sources.

One of these he counted as the thugs, and the other the brigands.

They increased their pace.

At the same time they became cautious.

Should a light appear ahead, it was their intention to extinguish their own means of illumination, so that they might creep up on the other parties unnoticed.

Another report.

This time succeeded by shouts.

How strange they sounded in that underground passage, with the vaulted roof overhead.

Weird and unearthly, indeed.

It was as though a legion of demons from the regions below had taken it upon themselves to engage in a combat here.

Still forward pressed the resolute detective.

His three companions looked at him and seemed to gather courage from his aspect.

He had taken an inventory of their weapons before leaving the chamber of skulls.

It was found that all of them possessed knives, but only Antonio carried a revolver.

Mr. Grimes was glad that even one of them should be in a condition for battle.

He meant to take part in the affair, whatever the situation might be.

Being ahead of the torch-bearer, his eyes were not dazzled by the light.

Hence he could see ahead.

Signs of a light appeared.

When sure of this Mr. Grimes turned and ordered the torch extinguished.

Now they could see the light ahead better than before, and there could be no mistaking the character of it.

Around a bend which they would soon reach a torch was burning.

Advancing, they soon reached the point where they could see.

To the surprise of the detective he found the passage filled with men.

They seemed to be engaged with some force beyond the range of his vision.

He was not long kept in ignorance of the true situation, for he recognized in these men the brigands with whom they had been engaged earlier.

How came they here?

It was easy to speculate, and doubtless he hit upon the truth in thus guessing.

Endeavoring to follow the fugitives through the intricate passages they had also become lost, and wandered about for many hours.

Eventually they reached this point, and had been brought into conflict with some parties unknown.

These latter must either be the thugs, Tom Grattan and his guide, or else O'Connor.

Undoubtedly the situation was a peculiar one, and at the moment Mr. Grimes was at a loss how to proceed.

Of course his aim was to benefit his friends, but the question arose as to how this could be done.

He thought it all over.

One thing was sure—so long as these men remained in the way it was certain that the rescue of O'Connor could not be effected.

They must be dispersed.

How?

That the brigands were cowards he had reason to believe from his past experience.

They would undoubtedly be frightened half to death if an attack was made in their rear.

Was it policy?

He believed so.

Turning to Antonio, he gave him directions how to act.

The other was surprised, but he understood what was needed, and impressed upon his fellow guides the necessity for much noise.

“Ready, Antonio!”

As far as they could see, there was about a baker's dozen of the brigands in view, although of course there might be more of them around the corner out of view.

It was not Mr. Grimes' desire to kill any of the rascals, he believed the end could be attained as well in another way.

Sometimes a scare is just as effective.

Hence he had given instructions to Antonio to aim low and not do any damage.

“Fire!”

The guides had their orders.

As soon as Antonio and the old detective discharged their weapons all set up a most terrific shouting that made the passage ring.

It was enough to terrify a brave man, let alone a cowardly nature.

The brigands seemed petrified with astonishment or terror.

They could not move apparently.

When the second discharge came, accompanied



KATY, MONTE CRISTO'S WIFE.

with yells even more terrific than before, one of them snatched up a torch and bounded down the side passage with the speed of a deer.

As if this was a signal, the balance made a break

after him, and soon the whole gang had disappeared from view.

Thus their object had been attained without the loss of a single life.

Our friends advanced.

Who were beyond?

Mr. Grimes called aloud:

“O’Connor!”

Only the echoes came back.

A strange fear crept to his heart; it did not seem possible that the foes of the brigands could have been Monte Cristo and his friend.

Again he called:

“O’Connor! Grattan, are you there?”

As before, the echoes mocked him, but no reply came to his question.

A huge bat, much like a vampire, swept by his head with vengeful fury, and, turning in its flight, came back straight at him.

Mr. Grimes, quick as lightning, leveled his ready revolver, and with wonderful skill, shot the bat down.

Antonio and his comrades gaped in wonder.

Mr. Grimes had now come to the conclusion that those in front must be the thugs.

He was eager to push on.

These men were in the way, and if they suffered it would be their fault, not his.

Again he led his men on.

They passed the spot where the brigands had held out.

As yet there was no interruption.

When they had gone on some thirty yards a shot suddenly sounded.

The bullet whizzed past the head of the man who carried the torch.

With admirable presence of mind he immediately threw himself upon his face.

The torch lay upon the rock.

Mr. Grimes deliberately put his foot on it, and darkness fell upon the scene.

At any rate they now knew what they had to deal with, and felt relieved.

There are times when anything is better than uncertainty, for men cannot form plans when they do not know the powers opposed to them.

Mr. Grimes gave his orders, and they began to advance through the darkness.

Knowing the character of those opposed to them, Mr. Grimes told his leading man that in case they were beset, he was to fire to kill.

The case had become desperate.

When it is life against life any man has the right to do his level best.

We are all more or less governed by the same natural law, "Self preservation is the first law of nature," and when a man risks his own life in order to save that of a fellow being, he takes a step higher, toward divinity.

It was a strange business, this working on through the darkness, with peril hovering near and yet unseen.

At any minute they might expect to be assaulted right and left, hip and thigh by the thugs from Peru and those in their employ.

A desperate battle would result, and how this might end—who could tell?

Now and then by means of a signal, the Yankee detective would halt his men.

Upon such occasions he was listening to discover if anything could be heard that would betray the presence of the enemy.

Sounds came to his ears.

Now it was the fluttering of a bat overhead, winnowing his face as it passed by, anon the squeak of a rat came, scampering out of their way just in time to avoid being trampled upon.

Sounds to disclose the locality of the enemy they failed to catch as quickly as they had expected, but progress was made all the while.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EXPLOSION.

Undoubtedly the enemy was retreating just as fast as they advanced.

On no other hypothesis could their absence be satisfactorily explained.

All the while our friends had to be on their guard lest a sudden attack occur.

The common darkness made it even more at any rate, neither side having an advantage.

Mr. Grimes led his men.

He had certain signals by means of which they could understand what he desired.

In the darkness, unless extra care was taken, one was apt to fire upon a friend instead of a foe, and such a catastrophe would prove very serious, indeed.

Slowly they crept along.

One of the guides was kept a certain distance in the rear with a lighted lantern, which he concealed as well as he could.

The idea was to have it handy in case it was suddenly needed.

Having made up his mind to shoot with deadly intent under the circumstances, the old detective kept his finger on the trigger as he glided forward through the dark passage.

One hand guided him, running along the wall, and seeking any obstructions.

Thus his passage was very noiseless.

He became aware of the fact that they were now at a point where the passage forked.

Which were they to take?

The puzzle could not be solved except light was brought to bear upon the matter.

Would it do to venture?

He signaled for the man with the lantern, and in a minute the fellow was at his side.

Then the detective took the slouched hat in which the lantern was buried, out of which he formed a shield, so that the light was allowed to escape only on one side, away from him.

Thus he had formed a dark lantern which would prove very serviceable.

With this impromptu invention he began to search the walls of the passage at the point where it forked, looking for the white arrow.

He found it.

One question remained.

In their retreat had the thugs chosen this passage or the other one?

On the other hand it would relieve them of all further trouble, and then again should the enemy be ahead, there was a strong probability that a fight must take place.

Sometimes Mr. Grimes took chances.

He found that condition now.

"We will go on, and if the enemy is in front he must look out. Forward, Antonio!"

The guide needed no urging.

His fighting blood was up, and he had determined to see his patron through.

They now pushed forward boldly, the man with the rude reflector now and then casting a flash of his light ahead to show them the way.

As yet not a sign of the enemy.

This was hopeful.

It began to look as though the thugs and their guides had taken the other route.

This would be a piece of luck, indeed, should it prove to be the truth.

Eagerly Mr. Grimes looked for some sign of his friends ahead.

Where could they be?

He recalled every word of the interview last held with the Irish Monte Cristo, but for the life of him he could not remember whether he had agreed that O'Connor should try to follow him or remain quiet until rescued.

Suddenly the man with the lantern uttered an exclamation, and at the same time covered the bull's-eye in a hasty but effective manner.

Darkness followed.

It was pitch black around them.

"What was it?" asked Mr. Grimes.

"A man. We are outwitted. The enemy has turned the guns on us. We must fly."

"Bosh! What does a man more or less signify? Besides, we are here to make way with any and every obstacle. Forward!"

His voice no longer felt pitched in a whisper.

He uttered his words aloud.

There came an answer, too.

"Better stay where you are. You may get hurt if you come any closer. We are three desperate men, well armed."

The voice came from the darkness beyond.

"Surely I ought to know that voice. I say, Tom Grattan, ahoy!"

The hail rang out loud and clear.

"Who is it speaks?"

"Grimes!"

"Thank Heaven! We are saved, Redmond, my boy."

Ah! it was those he sought.

The detective cast discretion to the wind, and advanced hastily.

In another moment he was shaking the hand of Tom Grattan, who passed him on to another, and even in the semi-darkness Mr. Grimes knew the sturdy clasp of Monte Cristo.

Saved!

Katy was there, too, and she put her fluttering little palm into the detective's strong one as she thanked him sweetly for the heroic measures he had undertaken in her behalf.

At that moment, while he held that little hand, and the warm blood mantled his cheeks, Mr. Grimes felt that he would willingly have gone through the same trouble again, did fortune permit, provided his reward would come in this way.

Grattan and his guide had found O'Connor after considerable difficulty.

The little party had been on the way back, when they heard the crash of firearms.

Not fully understanding what could have happened, they came to a halt, and bided their time, convinced that in due season they would learn what the cause of the disturbance was.

Then came the shouts and shots rolling along the galleries which had accompanied the assault of the little company on the brigands.

What occurred later we have already seen.

They thought some enemy was advancing upon them, when they saw the fugitive gleam of the hooded lantern, and had thrown their little force into the best possible position for defense.

Their joy was great when Mr. Grimes gave his name, and they realized that instead of foes they had found friends.

It was neither the time nor place for explanations; nevertheless, they gave a short accounting of their several adventures.

We know what happened to the detective.

After Mr. Grimes had left him, the Irish Monte Cristo had remained quiet.

For hours his wife slept.

He watched over her like a guardian angel.

It was a duty of love.

Realizing that he might soon desire to save what oil he had, he extinguished the light, and sat there in the darkness.

Completely exhausted, Katy slept a long time.

When she awoke it was with a little cry of fear, because of the intense darkness and a dream she had had, but her husband's arms were around her, and his voice uttered reassuring words of comfort into her ears.

She became herself.

When she learned what Mr. Grimes had said and done, she insisted upon Redmond seeking rest, for he needed it badly.

They ate a little.

Then Monte Cristo lay down with a coat for a pillow, and quickly fell asleep.

He was greatly wearied, and it was a comfort to know that his loving wife watched over him, her hand touching his brow with magnetic, sleep-producing power.

Hours passed ere he awoke.

Katy was still at her post.

Neither of them could mark the passage of time,

but they realized that a long time must have elapsed since the detective left.

They could even expect his return.

Perhaps it would be wise for them to be moving along, thus shortening the distance between themselves and liberty.

Redmond had matches.

Striking one of these he lighted a lantern.

Katy insisted upon carrying this, while her husband took the other things.

Thus they advanced.

It was not hard work.

In fact, as they went on, arm in arm, the young couple felt as though they were merely exploring some vast cavern.

Their spirits grew lighter.

They did not see the grim specter Death hovering around, as if endeavoring to claim them both as his victims.

Each had a slight headache, the result of being in this peculiar air so long; but with this exception they felt well.

They did not make very fast time, but after a while came to where the passage forked.

Remembering the directions given by the old detective, they found his chalk mark, and had no difficulty in moving on.

After a while they saw a light ahead.

Not dreaming of danger, they hailed it as a beacon that meant safety to them.

What was their surprise to see Tom Grattan and a couple of guides approach.

The meeting was affecting, for these two adventurous spirits had shared many perils together, and were thus the dearest of friends.

Tom told his story in short meter.

He spoke of Mr. Grimes as being safe, but quite exhausted, and the others supposed the old detective had sent him into the galleries with directions how to find the missing ones.

After a short time they began to move along the back trail.

Then it was they heard shouts and the rattle of fire-arms, proving that two forces were arrayed in deadly combat.

None of them knew what to make of it.

Tom Grattan had a grave suspicion that he had been followed to Rome by the dark-faced thugs, but he could not see what connection there was between this fact and the firing.

When Monte Cristo heard the shouting he declared the brigands must have followed them, and struck the passage ahead, but who they could be engaged with was a nut too hard for him to crack.

While they were in this state of uncertainty there came the hail, and the old detective, with his three guides, appeared.

Of course he was able to straighten out all the crinks in the line.

All seemed clear sailing now.

The brigands had been chased away, and the thugs had taken the wrong route apparently.

All that remained for our friends to do was to go over the back route.

They saw no reason for delay.

Cheerfulness now reigned.

The little party was reunited, and they knew there was a marked passage out.

This meant much to them.

Mr. Grimes had forgotten all he had suffered, and was in the lead.

There was only one danger he could anticipate at all, and this was the fact that perhaps the thugs with their guides had found the regular route again, and that the two forces would meet.

He kept the others prepared for this.

Without the slightest warning there came a sudden terrible rush of wind, accompanied by a horrible roaring sound.

It was as if the earth had been rent by the explosion of a thunderbolt.

Some of the party were knocked over by the force of the concussion.

All were tremendously alarmed.

Was it an earthquake?

Terrible Vesuvius was not so far away.

Mr. Grimes grasped the truth almost instantly, and it was a horrible realization, too.

CHAPTER XVII.

GRATTAN MAKES A DISCOVERY.

An explosion had indeed occurred. There could be no mistake about that.

The Irish Monte Cristo was not so quick to grasp the truth as Mr. Grimes.

"What under Heaven could that have been?" he almost gasped.

"Some of those thugs' work, I reckon."

"Then I hope they haven't failed to go up with the debris. What could have happened?"

"Nothing. What took place was the result of a deliberate plan."

"Then you think——"

"I am sure that explosion was intended for our particular benefit."

"But we were far away at the time."

Mr Grimes smiled.

"I presume a residence in this underground place is not conducive to bright thought, for you seem unusually dull, Mr. O'Connor."

"I know it, Mr. Grimes; but I begin to grasp the truth now. The explosion was not meant to kill us, but to imprison us here."

"Exactly."

"Then let us hasten to find out what success has attended the effort."

"It would be well, seeing how much it means to us. Come, let us move on."

All were now excited.

The terrible possibility of further wandering in the labyrinth brought a feeling of horror.

They soon began to realize that they were near the scene of destruction.

A dense dust filled the air.

It seemed to disturb them considerably, for several immediately sneezed.

"Look here."

Directly in front of them lay a dwarfish figure across their path.

It was wrapped in white garments, and looked like a petrified Roman of the early days.

All of them examined the figure with interest.

"A mummy," said O'Connor.

"Yes, it has been hurled out of some cavity in the rocks by the explosion. Thus the hand of modern man disturbs a sleep of eighteen hundred years."

It was astonishing.

And yet any day we may see in great museums the mummified figures of Egyptian kings over three thousand years old.

Those ancient worthies knew a thing or two about preserving mortal remains, which are secrets never yet unlocked by our modern undertakers.

Leaving the mummy where it lay, our little party pushed forward.

Their anxiety increased.

If the passage was blocked up it did not necessarily mean death to them, but continued wandering about the passages.

This would be particularly disagreeable now, when they had begun to believe their troubles were over, and the way out clear.

Soon they came to piles of debris.

The worst would be known in the space of a few minutes now.

At last they stood still.

The reason was obvious.

Further progress was effectually barred, as the passage was entirely closed.

What had fallen into the opening from above they could not even guess.

Perhaps some "palace" had been destroyed by the explosion, or it might have been some old ruin that had fallen when the mighty explosion shook the earth and stirred things up generally.

To dig through that mass would be a work of days, even to men appropriately armed with tools for such a purpose.

To those who were not, like our friends, it was a hopeless struggle.

They surveyed the pile of rocks by the aid of the lantern.

"What do you think, Mr. Grimes?"

"I believe they must have carried some sort of an infernal explosive with them."

"Perhaps a dynamite cartridge."

"Possibly, and yet the force of that is downward, while this seems to have raised the frightful weight above, and then allowed all to sink back."

"We have no hope here?"

"None in the least."

"And our only chance is to look for another passage that will take us out."

"What you say is true."

"One thing gives me hope. If we come to a fork and discover your chalk mark there we will know we have struck the passage."

"Yes, if the number is above seven. That is what I had marked below here."

"How high do they run?"

"Twenty-three was marked as I entered the main passage. We can tell just where we stand if we happen upon one of those."

"It was a happy thought that induced you to make those marks."

"Rather."

They spent no more time here, as the business before them was too serious and imperative to admit of delay.

Around them they saw evidences of other mummified figures that had been hurled from the rocky graves in the walls by the explosion.

These thugs from Peru, who had guarded a treasure secreted for some centuries, and who were bound to their duty by an oath handed down from the ancient followers of the Incas, had disturbed dust that had lain here six times as long as their venerated trust existed.

Turning away, our friends retraced their steps.

The first fork they came to they turned and left the passage they had been traversing.

Again the weary wandering began.

How would it end?

There was quite a party of them now, the three guides, Monte Cristo and his brave wife, Mr. Grimes, and Tom Grattan—seven in all.

This made company.

They cheered one another up by conversation and laughter.

Since Mr. Grimes had proven the possibility of their finding an outlet, the chances of an awful doom

overtaking them did not seem so terrible, and they could even joke.

How much of this gayety was assumed it would be hard to say.

For the sake of others men will often appear light-hearted when the heaviest of weights press upon them, and the outlook is gloomy indeed.

It all depends upon what kind of actors they are.

They came to a cross passage.

Taking the one lantern which was lighted the old detective searched eagerly.

Not a mark was found.

Now the question arose, which way should they go in order to have the best chance?

Mr. Grimes puzzled it out.

With his chalk he made a diagram of their course from the scene of the explosion.

Then he declared that by bearing to the left all the while their chances would be best.

A new system was adopted.

This passage was labeled A.

Thus there would be no confusion.

"I think," said Mr. Grimes, with a laugh, "that when we get out of here, I shall have to put in a bill to the authorities of Rome."

"What for?"

"Because I have spent so much time in labeling the streets of underground Rome. I am now at work on the avenues."

They all laughed at this sally.

Mr. Grimes had such a grim way of perpetrating a joke that it was made unusually comical—he seemed so serious that one would believe he might be a preacher or an undertaker instead of a punster.

Again they went on.

Hope was still bright within their souls.

"I only wish those rascals had found themselves on the wrong side of the explosion, and were given this trouble to escape."

Tom Grattan said this with vehemence, for he could not comprehend why the thugs wanted to pursue them so desperately.

He looked upon the treasure as something that was a thousand times better in circulation, doing good among human beings, than hoarded away in that cave far back among the Andes.

Perhaps he was not far wrong either.

One has to go slow in dealing with such questions as these.

They will bear close analysis.

Grattan was a good natured fellow, who had a genuine admiration for his chum, and the deepest regard for Monte Cristo's wife.

He had seen O'Connor in times of danger when his own head was good for nothing, and the coolness of the other had impressed him as belonging to an heroic soul.

In his way Tom looked up to the other as his superior, and so profound was his admiration that at any time he would have readily laid down his life for his friend, had the sacrifice been deemed necessary.

And yet no man enjoyed life as it came, in its various vicissitudes, more than Grattan.

He was always cheerful.

No matter how lowering the clouds might be, he sang and jested as only a light-hearted Irishman could upon such occasions.

A weary tramp followed.

They seemed to be going deeper into the bowels of

the earth all the while, for there could be no doubt but that the passage descended.

What did this mean?

The Tiber could not be far away.

Were they heading toward the river?

Perhaps the passage ran into the water.

Such a thought occurred to Mr. Grimes, and gave him no little uneasiness.

He looked ahead with a concern that he saw fit not to communicate to his friends.

At last he halted.

The reason was obvious.

They could go no farther.

A wall of rock arose before them—the gallery came to an abrupt end.

Turn which way they would, nothing met their eyes but the same rock.

Consternation now succeeded hope.

There did not seem to be a possibility that they could escape—their only choice would be to try and make their way back to the den of the brigands, and from that to the old ruin.

No one said a word for several minutes.

Even light-hearted Tom Grattan seemed to lose his amiability for the nonce.

Mr. Grimes, always practicable, was the first to recover from the rude shock.

“Come,” he said, “we must not feel bad. I’ve feared something like this would occur.”

“Our little game is blocked.”

“So it seems.”

“What shall we do?”

“I presume our only course is to turn back and go over our old ground to the place from whence we first started.”

"Meaning the brigand's den?"

The detective nodded.

Grattan was down on his knees examining something his quick eye had seen.

"What have you there, Tom?" asked O'Connor.

"Well, as far as I can see, it looks like the last remains of what once was a stout ladder. That surely was a round of it."

"The duse you say!"

Mr. Grimes sprang to his side.

He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction, which utterly bewildered his companions.

What was the man thinking about?

"Sure enough, this was once a part of a stout ladder. A lucky find, Grattan."

"How so, sir?"

"Otherwise we had turned away. Don't you see where they needed a ladder there must be a way out of this. That route lies above. There is another level up yonder, I firmly believe."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ROCK CLIMBER.

His words impressed the others, and sent a thrill through them.

Could they be true?

It would be a great thing for them.

How were they to find out?

Above them all was darkness.

Mr. Grimes took the lantern and proceeded to make an investigation.

He walked back twenty feet.

Then, by holding the light up he found that he was able to see the roof of the passage.

It did not disappear gradually, but suddenly.

This pleased him.

He took several poles which the guides carried for feeling the depth when they came to a declivity, and bound them into one continuous length.

Thus he had a pole about thirty feet long.

To the end of this he fastened the lantern.

Then he raised it with the help of Antonio.

It was an experiment, and all held their breath while success or failure remained in doubt.

Then a murmur arose, followed by a cheer.

All was just as Mr. Grimes had predicted.

There was another passage.

True, it began fully twenty feet above the floor of the one below.

Their ladder was only ten feet long.

How in the wide world were they to get up?

It was a tough question.

Mr. Grimes consulted with the guides.

Antonio showed himself bright at expedients.

Perhaps he was partly stirred up by the golden promise held out by Monte Cristo, in case he could clamber up to the level above.

Money equivalent to a hundred dollars is a sharp spur to an ordinary man's mind.

"Here is a stout rope," he said, pointing to one his companion carried.

If one of their number could only reach the upper level it would not take long for the rest to be drawn up with this rope. Antonio wrestled with the puzzle. He took the ladder and climbed up as far as he could go, while the lantern still hung from the pole above him. Then he felt the face of the rock to ascertain whether its rough surface offered any chance for him to get a hold with hands or feet. When he came down there was a glitter in his eyes that told he had made up his mind with regard to the matter.

It could be done.

He took the poles apart.

They were stout ones, and could stand a good deal in the way of rough usage.

One he bound to each side of the ladder.

This increased its length eight feet.

The third pole he chopped into lengths the width of the ladder.

Thus rounds were made.

In a rude but effective way he bound each short piece to the new portion of the ladder.

The others looked on.

Naturally they were deeply interested, for their own lives might depend upon the success or failure of the attempt.

At length it was finished.

The men took hold, and the ladder was placed against the wall.

Antonio wrapped the rope about his waist, as he needed both his arms free.

Then he began to climb.

Reaching the top of the main ladder he became more cautious, as the risk began here.

One of the lanterns had been lighted, and this was also secured to his waist.

It was a picture for an artist—the weird surroundings, the man on the ladder clinging to the face of the cliff, with a lantern at his belt, the eager watchers below, and occasionally a bat flapping past the light.

Antonio's keen eyes sought every crevice in the rock, by means of which he could lighten the weight that was on the ladder.

Sometimes it was his hand he thrust into the crack, throwing much of his weight upon his arm, and then anon his foot.

Tediously but surely he was making his way toward the level above.

Those below almost held their breath in suspense.

What if Antonio lost his hold?

Should one of the wrapped rounds give way, he would be pitched to the ground.

Such a fall would mean disaster, broken bones, or a cracked neck.

He did not mean to tumble.

Before he took each step he made sure of it by testing his hold.

Finally he was clinging to the face of the rock.

Another step would place him on the topmost round of the lengthened ladder.

Still he had not grasped the edge of the upper level. Could the plan be a failure just because the ladder lacked a foot more in length.

It would be too bad.

Antonio now straightened himself up and was feeling for a new hold above, preparatory to making the last upward step.

Suddenly those below heard him utter an exclamation of satisfaction.

"What is it, Antonio?"

"My hands are fast above. I hold the level," answered the Italian, jubilantly.

"Good. Be careful—a slip means death."

The guide knew this.

He went to work systematically.

With one hand he uncoiled the rope, and fastened the loop to a projecting spur of rock above him, allowing the rest to trail below.

This gave him a means to prevent a fall.

Finally, pushing his lantern well on to the shelf above, he prepared to follow.

Every muscle and nerve in his body was put to the test as he drew himself up and finally got one knee over the edge.

To pull himself up was now easy work.

Those below united in a shout.

It was a victory well achieved.

All honor to valiant Antonio, who had braved the peril and deserved the reward.

The balance of the task was easy.

Mr. Grimes mounted the ladder.

With the rope to guide him, and Antonio above to assist him over the edge, he, too, speedily gained the upper level.

The other guides and Grattan followed. Then the rope was lowered, noose end down.

Katy put her foot in the noose, and with a laugh told those above to haul away.

Strong arms drew her up.

O'Connor watched her ascent with his heart in his mouth, so to speak.

When at the top he saw Mr. Grimes bend over, and presently his wife vanished from his strained vision.

She was safe.

It now came Monte Cristo's turn.

As he was the last, he secured the end of the rope to the ladder, so that this useful companion to their travels might be drawn up.

There could be no telling how soon they would need it again.

Other like ascents might be before them, or a sudden dip that must necessitate a descent on their part.

All was soon ready for progress.

The gallery above seemed just about the same as the one below, only that it had ended in the great black pit.

Convinced now that every obstacle must give way before such determined hearts, they pushed on with new resolution.

When the next "crossing"—as Grattan dubbed the forks—was reached, and Mr. Grimes set to work looking for his private stamp, the rest gathered anxiously near, holding the mouth of the gallery from which they had just emerged, for fear they should enter it again.

"Eureka!"

"You have found it, Grimes?"

"Yes."

"What number?"

"Thirteen."

"Gad, I'll never call that an unlucky one again as long as I live," quoth Grattan

"It is above the fatal seven, where the explosion took place, hence the way from here on to the chamber of skulls is clear."

"Lead on, comrade. The sooner we are out of this musty old hole the better it will please me. Why, actually it seems as though I've been buried alive in these miserable catacombs of Rome for months instead of days."

O'Connor was thinking of his wife, too.

The brave little woman had suffered much, and most of her sex would have given up the battle long since, but she had too much pluck.

Filled with renewed hope and enthusiasm, they pushed on now.

Every step counted.

Would those desperate foes throw any more obstacles in their way?

They fervently hoped not.

Other marks were seen.

"We are near the chamber where the bones of the old Christians lie," said Mr. Grimes.

O'Connor looked at his wife.

She saw his fear and laughed.

"Don't be alarmed on my account, Redmond, dear. My father was a surgeon in the old country, you remember. As a girl I have played with the bones in his office—just think of it—and he said when I helped him in several operations that I had more nerve than most men. A grave-yard of bones wouldn't scare me a bit."

Mr. Grimes laughed.

"What a brave little body we have here?"

As for O'Connor, he was relieved of a load.

"Bless your heart, mavourneen, if I faint away at the sight, sure it's you who will take care of a poor fellow."

Katy's clear light laugh rang through the arched passage—a strange sound, indeed, with such weird surroundings.

"There's a light ahead," announced Antonio, who had taken the lead.

"Do you think it's the chamber?"

"I have little doubt of it."

As they advanced it was seen that the place of the skulls indeed lay there.

Entering it they looked for those whom Mr. Grimes had left behind here.

The widow and her son came to meet them.

They seemed greatly relieved.

"We feared that something terrible had happened to you," said the boy.

"Yes, when that terrible explosion shook the earth we did not know what to think. Then a party of gentlemen with guides passed through, going out. We questioned them, and they said something terrible had happened deep in there, and that if we had any friends in yonder we could give them up for lost. You may be sure we have been very anxious all the while."

"What were the gentlemen like?"

"Very similar to each other—I thought they were Spaniards—the same ones who had made inquiries after you, Mr. Grimes."

"You are quite right, madam."

Mr. Grimes saw that the mother and son were ready to depart from the place.

Tenderly they had placed the mortal remains of the dear one in a sheet brought for the purpose, and which was tied up so that the guides in her employ could carry it out. Later on the bones of the lost Englishman could be put in a box and forwarded for burial to the "tight little island."

All was now ready for the march.

The procession moved on.

After all their trials would they finally see the blue heavens again?

Everything went well.

The last passage was left behind.

As they stepped into the fresh air again, to find new life in its bracing ozone, the bells of a monastery or nunnery near by were chiming.

It was the witching hour of midnight.

CHAPTER XIX.

LEFT IN THE LURCH.

Every one was thankful.

Even the guides showed this, for it meant considerable money to Antonio.

Our four friends went to the hotel.

After what they had passed through, even Roman beds—and they are not the best in the world by any means—would seem comfortable.

It was late in the morning when Mr. Grimes came down to order breakfast in the manner common to travelers in the Eternal City.

One of the first persons he saw was Gonzales.

At sight of him the man started, and his hand was half raised to his neck.

Mr. Grimes knew that he kept a stiletto concealed down his back.

Some nations carry a knife at their side.

Western desperadoes often have a bowie knife down in their right boot leg.

In Peru assassins and persons who have need of a stiletto, conceal it in a peculiar scabbard just back of the neck, where it can be reached instantly, and is not at all in the way.

Customs differ, you see.

The man seemed to remember where he was, for he let his hand drop.

Without hesitation the old detective walked directly up to him, and looked him in the eye.

“Balked again. Make up your mind that the next

time you try anything of that nature some one's going to get hurt, and it won't be my friends either."

The man answered never a word, but there was a peculiar light in his eyes that the old detective never forgot.

It was the baleful glare of a murderer.

The more he thought about these men the more Mr. Grimes worried.

They were equal to anything, and would not stop at the most desperate crime.

"We will never be safe until we buy them off. I shall take the first opportunity that offers to have a talk with the leader. Perhaps they are tired of it, too, now."

They determined, however, before doing this, to make one last effort to throw the Peruvian bloodhounds off the track.

When O'Connor appeared, the three men had a long consultation.

"If it was in the States we would have little trouble in giving them the slip. There one is free. Here, this plagued passport business describes your appearance, and you can't go disguised."

"That's a fact."

"You've seen all of Rome you want."

"Bah! I'm tired of the place. Our experiences in those musty catacombs has given me a dislike for the whole city. Whenever I hear Rome mentioned again, I'll have that dry dusty taste in my mouth that is peculiar to the galleries."

"Well, we'll go to St. Peter's this morning. Then, at noon I'll slip away and see what sort of plan I can arrange whereby we may be able to give these rascals the slip."

They all agreed with him.

So the quartette went to St. Peter's, climbing even up into the great dome, and taking in all the wonders of the cathedral as tourists do.

On the way back to the hotel Mr. Grimes suddenly stopped the driver of their vehicle.

"Wait a few minutes here. I see an old friend."

As he stepped out he took the whip from the hands of the driver.

Watching him with unusual interest they saw him step up to a gentlemanly dressed man whose back was toward them.

As Mr. Grimes put his hand on this party's arm he wheeled and presented a well known face.

"Gerald!"

Yes, it was indeed the treacherous guide who had betrayed them into the hands of the brigands.

At sight of Mr. Grimes the fellow's knees seemed to knock together.

"Count Braganza!" he gasped, for it will be remembered that this was the title our friend had assumed in his Italian disguise.

"On deck, Gerald. You did not expect to see me here, I reckon," replied the American.

Gerald recovered his self-possession

"I am delighted to see that you escaped from those rascals, count. They beat me into a state of insensibility, and left me for dead."

"That lie won't work, Gerald. I saw you playing cards with several of the brigands after we were in their power. No doubt they won the money you were paid for betraying us, but it was a noble piece of business, Gerald, and I've been thinking that it is a shame you have gone without a medal for your bravery. I'm going to mark you now for life."

Zip!

The whip cut across the handsome olive colored face of the false courier, leaving a red line where it fell so fiercely.

Then for the space of a minute or two there was the liveliest little circus possible.

Gerald drew a dagger.

He would have buried it in the body of the detec-



HORSEWHIPPING THE TRAITOR.

tive had he been given the chance, but Mr. Grimes kept his whip playing in the most artistic fashion, blinding the fellow.

Wildly the baffled guide roared and screamed with mingled rage and pain.

Mr. Grimes found little trouble in keeping out of his reach, and put in good work until the fellow in

despair threw himself face downward on the stone pavement.

In Rome, just as in New York, when a fight is over, the police officers make their appearance.

Mr. Grimes made a plain statement in Italian, and managed to slip a coin in the hand of each officer, which convincing argument settled the business at once.

Entering the vehicle he handed what was left of the whip to the astonished driver, remarking:

"There, I feel better now. The next time that scoundrel betrays a party of Americans into the hands of the brigands, I hope some one will put a bullet into his body for keeps. Driver, I will pay you for that whip, and I think the costs of that little affair very light in connection with the satisfaction it gives me."

They were soon at the hotel.

Dinner was served.

Later on Mr. Grimes lighted a cigar, and sauntered out alone, intent on business.

He had his hands full.

It became apparent very shortly that he was being followed closely.

A man sauntered after him.

To make sure the detective turned up several streets, stopped frequently, and, although not looking back, made sure of certain facts.

He had a little arrangement of minute mirrors in his hand, and a glance in this told him what was going on in his rear.

Whenever he turned up a street the shadow cautiously did the same—if he halted the man with the red neckscarf appeared to be busily engaged looking in at some tradesman's window.

Mr. Grimes was used to all the signs.

It took him but a short time to make sure that he was really being followed.

Having definitely settled this thing to his satisfaction, the detective coolly examined his pursuer.

He saw a man dressed like an Italian, and wearing brass rings in his ears.

Noting his walk, Mr. Grimes came at once to the conclusion that this person was one of the thugs, artfully disguised.

The next job was to outwit him.

Who could do this better?

Mr. Grimes set himself to work, and in just twenty minutes he so confused the fellow that he was running after one of a dozen Americans or Englishmen sauntering along the street.

Leaving him here all at sea, the cunning old man-tracker made his way to the river.

Here, according to appointment, he met the guide, Antonio, who had been so well paid for his services that he was willing and anxious to continue on in the same line.

The detective did not as yet know exactly what plan he would utilize.

One thing alone he made sure of, and this was the fact that they must leave Rome within twenty-four hours, unknown to their pursuers.

This was the game he played.

When he reached the bank of the Tiber he found Antonio there waiting.

The guide heard what he had to say.

Then he considered a minute while the detective watched his face eagerly.

He knew Antonio could help them.

"I have it, signor."

"Good."

"Besides being a guide I am half owner in a small vessel. We sail by morning."

"Where are you bound?"

"To Athens."

"That is just the ticket. They cannot dream of finding us there, and we will have little trouble in passing on to Constantinople."

A bargain was soon made.

Antonio agreed to have everything in readiness, and a boat at the landing from midnight up to within an hour of daybreak.

Fortunately they traveled with little luggage.

It was their policy to buy new things and discard the old—an expensive way of doing that only millionaires could afford.

So Mr. Grimes returned to the hotel by a round-about way.

He told the others what arrangements he had made for flight.

They agreed with him that it was an excellent expedient, and left the arrangements entirely in his hands.

Mr. Grimes talked of an intended excursion on the morrow to visit Vesuvius.

He even engaged guides to accompany them, and bought tickets for the passage.

This was done to blind the eyes of any spy who might be watching near by.

In the secrecy of their rooms they packed their few belongings, discarding everything that was apt to be cumbersome.

Soon all was in readiness.

Mr. Grimes bade all lie down and sleep, as he promised to awaken them at the proper time.

Thus they were not entirely cheated out of the night's rest they needed so badly.

It was just two o'clock in the morning when the old detective softly awoke the rest.

"Time we were moving."

He had made all arrangements.

The entire bill had been settled on the sly, and everything was in readiness for a secret departure from the city of Rome.

They made their way quietly to the private entrance.

Mr. Grimes had seen one of the thugs who stopped at the hotel, seated in the office on guard, and he only hoped the fellow would stay there.

Once in the open air, he led the way around a corner where a vehicle was in waiting.

Into this they climbed.

It was rather rough this leaving city after city in such a hurried way, but the exigency of the case was manifest.

Those thugs were bent on avenging the insult that had been offered their race by the men who had discovered and secured the hidden treasure buried by the old Incas, and sacredly guarded by them from that time down to the present.

At length the vehicle reached the river.

The driver was a man whose business did not carry him near the hotel, and he was paid well to keep away from there.

Was the boat on hand?

Yes, there it lay, and Antonio himself came forward to help them in.

A short time later all were on board a small coasting vessel, the anchor was weighed, and just before early dawn they departed from Rome.

CHAPTER XX.

STORM TOSSED.

When noon came they were skimming along over the blue sea.

Everything seemed beautiful.

Being good sailors our little party felt only exhilaration from the motion of the waves.

The little vessel with her sails spread, looked like a sea-gull speeding over the surface of the water.

Mr. Grimes lay down and slept soundly for some hours, as he had had no rest during the night just passed, and was tired out.

The others talked about him.

They realized the debt of gratitude they owed this remarkable man, and nothing would be too good for him when they came to settling up.

How often he had saved them from the snares of the fowlers, their bitter enemies.

It was exceedingly doubtful whether they would ever have left New York but for him.

About noon Mr. Grimes joined them.

Antonio had himself taken charge of the little Roman schooner, leaving his partner to remain behind and hire out as a guide.

He had a man and a boy for his crew.

Katy looked into the provision chest, and as Antonio had been given money and orders, he had stocked it with the best the Roman market would afford at this time of year.

The wife of the Irish Monte Cristo was not above accepting a situation as she found it.

When Redmond looked her up he discovered that she had taken it upon herself to superintend the getting of dinner.

The boy was working under her orders.

A royal dinner they had, too.

Every one voted Katy a success as cook, and their praises made her cheeks burn.

So far everything was working beautifully.

Mr. Grimes declared he felt like a new man to get away from Rome with its gases and musty old catacombs, out upon the lovely Mediterranean, where the blue waves danced so merrily in the bright sunlight.

All seemed as merry as a marriage bell.

Antonio found that his neat little craft elicited praise from the guests, and he showed his white teeth in a proud smile when they complimented him upon these things, which are not always found on an Italian coasting vessel.

Redmond O'Connor had been talking with Antonio during the afternoon.

He had made arrangements with him to let Athens go, and sail straight on through the Bosphorus to Constantinople.

This would save them much bother, and at the same time tend to confuse their enemies, if by any chance they should discover that those they sought had sailed with Antonio for Athens.

The day passed pleasantly.

Then came the night.

They skirted the shore at this point, and entered a harbor, as Antonio was a careful man, and did not mean to spend more nights upon the open sea than he could help, not having the nautical instruments

carried on all larger vessels to warn mariners of storms and discover their position.

There was a town upon the shore.

The fragrance of flowers was wafted across the bay to them, accompanied by the notes of the guitar or mandolin, and the voices of dark "Italia's daughters."

What with the soft moonlight, the dancing wavelets, each of which seemed silver-tipped, the fragrant odor in the air, and the soft notes of distant music, it was a night of poetry, long to be remembered.

The enchanted travelers sat up late.

They could only with difficulty tear themselves away and retire to rest.

It was long after midnight when they did so.

As Mr. Grimes awoke he realized that it was broad daylight, and the vessel in motion.

Coming on deck later, he found they were almost out of sight of land, and running before a strong east wind.

The sea was much rougher than on the preceding day, as the wind blew stronger, but the little craft was stanch, and as yet there did not seem any severe indications of bad weather.

As the day advanced the wind grew stronger, and the little coaster rolled heavily.

Still she showed splendid qualities, and all hands rather enjoyed the exhilarating dash.

Hours passed.

Antonio appeared a trifle anxious.

He cast a glance every now and then toward the northeast, where a low-lying bank of clouds appeared, and the wind was undoubtedly working around to that quarter.

"I'm afraid it will blow us out into the open sea, and we may have trouble," he said.

All of them became a trifle anxious.

The storm came on.

Soon it became so severe that O'Connor insisted on Katy going below.

Already the spray was flying high over the little craft, and the waves rolling.

Sail had been reduced so that she simply carried enough to give her steerage way.

Everything had been done to make things snug, and the rest must be left to Providence.

Sailors, above all others, have to be watchful.

Eternal vigilance is the price of safety, and while leaving things in a certain way to the guidance of the Great Captain above, they watch for any chance to insure their safety.

The blow increased as the day grew older.

At length the little vessel labored hard.

"If we could only make a harbor, it would give me some peace of mind," said Antonio.

The honest fellow was a good deal more worried because of the passengers he had on board than on his own account.

They were experiencing the worst of the storm as the afternoon waned.

Evening came.

It was destined to be a night never to be forgotten by our tourist friends.

The wind howled through the rigging, and fairly shrieked, as though a legion of demons had been let loose.

All around them the waves rose and fell like small mountains, and the fierce wind, snatching the crest

off each billow, scattered it to leeward in the form of spray.

Such a wild scene it was.

Nightfall on the sea is always weird and grand, but how much more so when a storm is raging in all its majesty?

"If we can only keep away from land we will weather the gale."

This was what worried Antonio.

He feared lest with this howling wind and rolling sea the little vessel might be swept upon a lee shore and wrecked.

He kept listening almost constantly for the awful roar of breakers ahead.

There was one point he feared—where the rocks thrust their ugly length out into the sea.

Once sure of passing this, he did not see why they need fear further danger.

It was not long before the others learned his fears, and all were listening for any sound that might mean danger ahead.

Now and then waves swept the deck.

They only saved themselves from being washed overboard by lashing their bodies to the masts or some stationary article.

Antonio was at the wheel.

Near him Mr. Grimes stood, his arm locked through a rope, secure from the grasp of the hungry waves that swept the deck.

Whenever there came a lull in the wind they managed to exchange a few words.

The little vessel rode the seas like a duck, but such was their magnitude that at times she looked like a chip poised over some dreadful chasm, down which she shot with lightning velocity, only to al-

most be raised on her stern as she climbed the billow beyond.

The night was not dark.

Back of the clouds the moon shone, and this enabled them to see what went on.

"We are doing nicely, Antonio," shouted Mr. Grimes.

"Oh, yes. If we can only weather that point the little ship can stand it."

He was proud of the gallant way his vessel raced before the storm.

It was carrying them on their way at a rapid rate, and in a favorable quarter.

O'Connor was doubly anxious, for he had two lives in his charge instead of one.

It was about ten o'clock.

No one knew the hour, for there was not the slightest chance of looking.

As yet not the least show of a break in the storm had appeared.

The clouds were scudding along, and once in a while the moon shot into view, but the wind remained just as powerful, and the sea rode as high as it had at any time.

A loud shout from O'Connor reached the ears of those at the wheel.

He was forward, having fastened himself to the foremast, and had taken upon himself the duty of a look-out.

"Listen!" he shouted.

The others did so.

When the vessel mounted a billow, they caught a sound ahead that seemed to strike a chill to their very souls—it was the roar of danger.

"Breakers ahead!" said Mr. Grimes.

He knew the danger, but was calm.
 It was not his nature to show excitement.
 Antonio was listening.
 Again they rode a billow.

He noted the exact spot from whence came those awful sounds.

When he turned to the old detective there was a peculiar look in his face.

"We are heading straight on to the rocks. If we keep on this course all is lost."

"What can we do?"

"At the risk of losing one stick we must get a little more canvas on her. Then, if it holds, we may sheer off and escape the rocks."

"The sooner it is done the better. Here, let me take the wheel, Antonio."

The latter shouted to his crew, and soon the man and boy were at his side.

It was a dangerous task.

The sheet might be torn from their hands and the sail carried away.

What they wanted was enough sail aloft to give them a chance to use the rudder, so that a course might be taken which would keep them clear of the terrible rocks.

Mr. Grimes' heart was almost in his mouth as he saw them set to work.

Luckily Antonio was a thorough sailor.

He understood the many little tricks by means of which seamen baffle the eager winds and hungry waves that yearn to engulf them.

The sail was presented to the wind without any mishap, and then the jib went up.

Now the little vessel was spinning along even faster than at any time before.

The greatest danger lay in the fact that with her accelerated speed she might bury her nose in some billow and never come up again.

Like lightning Antonio sprang to the wheel.

His practiced eye took in everything.

"May the Virgin prosper us," he uttered.

They certainly needed the favoring power from above, for if they escaped at all it would be by the narrowest of margins.

"We have a chance," cried Antonio, as he held the wheel and put the vessel on a new course as close as he could with that terrible wind driving it onward.

Their chance was small, it appeared, for the booming continued almost dead ahead, and presently the rocks loomed up before them, with the spray dashing wildly on high.

It was a fearful sight.

Once they struck all must be lost.

Each one of them remained in an agony of suspense, trembling lest they should hear the crash that would announce the vessel's doom.

CHAPTER XXI.

STEALING A BRIDE FROM A TURKISH HAREM.

Nearer they swept.

In a few minutes now they would know the worst, whether they were destined to die here or pass on in safety.

The luck that had followed the Irish Monte Cristo in the past clung to him still.

"I believe we'll make it," shouted Antonio.

His voice was drowned in the roar of the baffled waters, as they dashed against the massive rocks, only to be hurled back in defeat.

The vessel felt the effect of this dreadful turmoil, and rocked in a manner that must have sent a shiver of dread through more than one brave heart.

As she swept past the rock there was not twenty feet to spare.

It was a close shave.

All of them breathed easier when the danger was over, and an open sea beyond.

They had been saved as by a miracle.

For some time they labored on under this press of canvas, but as there was constant danger of disaster, Antonio at length decided to return once more to the goose wing.

Through the remainder of the night they continued to run before the gale.

By morning it had broken, and they were able to once more hoist sail and take a course.

Mr. Grimes was astonished to find that the vessel

was entirely destitute of every nautical instrument save a poor compass.

O'Connor made up his mind that at the first opportunity he would present Antonio with barometer, sextant, quadrant, and all the instruments needed, as the Italian knew the use of them, having sailed on larger vessels.

This day was a good one for progress.

The wind continued fair though strong, and wafted them on their way.

Thus several days passed.

They reached the straits of Bosphorus.

What difficulties lay in their way the gold of the wealthy tourists caused to vanish, and the little vessel sailed on toward the proud city of the Turk.

Here our friends parted from Antonio.

The worthy fellow was really sorry to leave them, for they were the best patrons of his life.

And now the scene had changed.

From Rome they had entered Constantinople, and were in the Orient.

They were wise enough to adapt themselves to the country they visited.

Turkey presents strange sights to the tourist.

When we visit England, France, Spain, or Germany, even Russia, we see people with whom we have become familiar at home, but once Constantinople, with its mosques, bazars, minarets, and quaint streets, filled with native Turks, is reached, a strange life opens up before the observing traveler.

Mr. Grimes took the lead.

He knew what should be done, and first of all hunted up a man to whom Antonio had directed him—a gentlemanly personage, evidently a Greek, who would act as courier.

Through him they found comfortable quarters for lodging—the best the city afforded.

The Turks do not travel much.

When they do visit another city they find board and lodging at the house of a friend or else camp out under a tent.

All was strange to our company.

They could not get used to the queer ways of the natives at once, but being observing they picked them up readily.

On the next day they began to see the sights of famous Constantinople.

There is no need of our accompanying them wherever they went.

A guide book can be bought for a small sum, and to that source we must refer the reader who delights in descriptions.

Incidents alone require our attention.

The days passed like magic.

Everything was so charming that all of our friends had begun to yield to the peculiar influence of the oriental climate.

In fact they were gradually falling into a condition when, as Tom Grattan expressed it, "they didn't care whether school kept or not," when they were rudely aroused from their sense of security.

It came about in rather a singular way.

Grattan had expressed a great desire to see the interior of a genuine Turkish harem, the home where the wealthy old Turk keeps his dozen or two beautiful wives.

In fact Tom said he was hungering to see a woman's face, for in Turkey the gentler sex are never allowed on the street without having their faces almost entirely concealed.

He found in the Greek courier a man of his own heart, ready for an adventure, and while the others were resting at night these two set out on an expedition.

It was full of danger.

This added spice to it for such hotspurs.

Tomas was the courier's name.

He had taken a tremendous fancy for light-hearted Grattan, and proposed showing him the interior of a pasha's harem.

They reached the outskirts of the city, and climbing a wall entered private grounds.

Here grew luxuriant trees and plants.

It was truly an Oriental Eden.

The moon looked down upon the scene, and made it enchanting in the extreme.

Grattan had a large spice of romance in his constitution, and he could not fail to be aroused by the soft beauty of the scene.

They crept forward.

Nearing the house they heard soft music, and lights could be seen hanging on the trees.

It was like fairy land.

Then Tom found himself gazing upon groups of women, beautiful as houris.

The place was guarded by several black eunuchs, but as there had perhaps never been occasion for their services as guards, they had become lax in that particular.

Tom's gaze was soon riveted upon one of the inmates of the harem in particular.

Her face fascinated him.

He believed he was looking upon his fate.

Finally, at his suggestion, the Greek attracted her

attention, and Tom was thrilled to see his divinity face to face.

The wily Greek informed the girl that the brave American had risked his life to see her.

Tom knew a little of the Turkish tongue, and looks had to do the rest.

He found the girl discontented with the life to which she was doomed, her parents having sold her to the pasha.

The latter was immensely wealthy, so there was no hope that she could be bought.

Finally the two intruders stole away, promising to come on the following night.

Grattan seemed to be walking on air all of the succeeding day, and his friends could not but notice the sudden change in his spirits.

He had entered a pasha's harem, and not only delighted his eyes with the beauty of the inmates, but conversed with the one person for whom he had looked these years—his fate.

Again when night descended upon the Orient, these two men set out to encounter the dangers of their secret mission.

Fortune favored them.

They passed through the garden, and for a second time looked upon the harem.

Zella was waiting.

She watched her opportunity and joined them, for her heart had already been strangely touched by the bold Irishman's ways.

They walked hither and thither in the garden.

Tomas followed behind, watchful for danger.

Grattan, impulsive, like most of his nation, could make love in a way to stir up the heart of any susceptible maiden.

He pressed his suit with such ardor that he gained the girl's partial consent to fly with him.

Better be the one wife of a man like this than an inmate of even a sultan's harem.

Zella had been educated with all the peculiar features natural to life in the Orient, but she had had some intercourse with the wife of an American missionary, and the seeds sown in her heart now bore fruit.

She believed this life was beneath the level to which woman was designed, and hence eagerly seized an opportunity to shake off the shackles that bound her.

Besides she already loved Tom Grattan with all the fire of her tropical nature.

Yes, she would go with him anywhere.

Tom gloried in his progress.

He dreamed of Zella at night, and thought of her all through the day.

The denouement came sooner than had been anticipated.

For some nights they had been lucky, and had been seen by no one.

This fact, perhaps, made them a trifle reckless.

They were walking along one of the garden paths, and Tom breathing words of devotion into the ears of the sweet creature at his side, when suddenly she uttered a shriek of terror.

Before them, in the path, stood a human figure.

It was a man, elegantly dressed in Turkish costume, and bearing a scimitar-like sword at his side.

They had no need to be told who this was.

The pasha stood before them.

"Dog of an infidel, what do you here?" he demanded, hoarsely, unsheathing his blade.

Tom, though taken by surprise, was not at all disconcerted, for he had the usual assurance of his race.

"Pasha, I owe you an apology for this underhand way of doing things, but I have fallen in love with Zella here, and would buy her of you. Now, don't get angry, pasha, you know how it is yourself, and what you would do under similar circumstances. Now, be good natured, and name your price. I will pay you five times what Zella cost you."

This "blarney," as Tom afterward described it, only seemed to further enrage the Turk.

"Wretched fool, you have come to your death," he exclaimed, hotly.

Tom had taken a step forward.

The shining blade of the Turk, keen as a razor, swept through the air, as though the pasha would have decapitated his enemy.

There's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip.

The adventurer dropped like a flash and the blade whistled through thin air.

Grattan knew full well the time for talk had now gone by, and action must take its place.

Quick as a flash he sprang forward.

He had no weapon in his hand, nor did he need one, for his clenched fist came against the head of the irate pasha with a force that would have certainly felled an ox.

The man was hurled senseless to the ground.

Now the die was cast.

Grattan turned to the girl.

"Zella, you must go with me. It means death for you to remain here."

She knew it.

Placing her hand in Tom's she looked into his face, and said, solemnly:



TOM COULD FEEL HER HAND TREMBLING.

"I am yours, in life or death."

Inwardly he swore she should never repent that sincere trust in him.

“We must fly,” said the alarmed courier. “When the pasha recovers he will have hot pursuit made. Trust all to me—come.”

Turning, they hurried from the garden.

Tom assisted Zella, and he could feel her hand tremble as he held it.

Uttering reassuring words they mounted the wall and were away.

Danger still menaced them among the minarets and mosques of Constantinople.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FLIGHT FROM CONSTANTINOPLE.

Mr. Grimes was sitting on a balcony late that night, smoking a cigar.

Somehow or other he could not sleep, and had no desire to make the attempt.

The strange sights in the streets, the lighted booths, the torch bearers—link carriers they called them in olden days—and kindred scenes had a wonderful attraction for him.

As he sat there smoking a fine Turkish cigar, his thoughts somehow went out to Tom.

That worthy was up to something.

He would not act in the way he did unless this was so.

Mr. Grimes could give a guess, and he had a pretty shrewd idea of the truth.

In the midst of his thought he was suddenly aware that some one had come up behind him.

"Who is it?"

"Only me, Mr. Grimes."

"Ah, Tom. Have a cigar and a chat."

"Not now, sir."

"Why, you're all out of breath. What's wrong?"

"I've gone and done it."

"Eh?"

"Knocked the sultan's favorite pasha down."

"Good heavens!"

"That ain't the worst of it."

"Well, it's bad enough. What else?"

"I've run off with the loveliest creature in his harem, and intend making her Mrs. Grattan at the earliest possible opportunity."

Mr. Grimes almost fell off his chair.

"Confound it all, Grattan, you've as good as signed your death warrant."

"No, I haven't, by a long shot."

"Where is she?"

"Safe on board a vessel."

"The duse you say."

"I've just run up here to get my things, and say good-bye to you all."

"Where are you bound?"

"Cairo, in Egypt."

"Take care. The Turks are closely connected there."

"I'll fix it all. Where will we meet you?"

"At Cairo. We'll leave in a few days by the first regular steamer that sails."

"Good. I was extremely lucky in meeting our friend Antonio this evening."

"What! Antonio here?"

"Yes. He met with an accident, and put back to port. All is ready for sailing. We will be off before the break of day."

"Well, it takes an Irishman to rush things through in a hurry. I thought you were up to something, you rascal. Just think what danger you've put your neck in."

"She's worth it, man. Just wait till you see her, and then you'll agree——"

"Spare me a lover's rhapsodies, Tom. Time must be precious to you. Here's my hand, and good luck be with you, my boy."

The impulsive lover had indeed been favored by

fortune in his pursuit, though it remained an open question as to whether luck would continue to be with him upon the sea.

"The vessel will probably be boarded ere you get through the straits of Marmora. What will you do then, my dear fellow?"

"That doesn't worry me. Antonio has a secret hiding place where we can be secreted in case of danger. Don't dream but that we shall reach Cairo in safety. The luck that has attended Tom Grattan thus far will see him through."

They shook hands warmly.

Mr. Grimes liked the young man, for he was as warm-hearted as he was generous, and ever ready to assist a fellow being.

Grattan hurriedly departed, taking his bag.

Soon Mr. Grimes retired.

Some hours later he heard a great rumpus, and arising, discovered that soldiers were in the house, searching for the imprudent tourist who had committed the most flagrant outrage that could be put upon a Turk—rifled a harem of its loveliest inmate, and knocked a pasha down.

This was a crime punishable with death.

Where was the miscreant?

There were not many foreigners in Constantinople at the time.

Besides, the pasha had recognized the daring intruder of his grounds as one of the party of Americans who had spent money so lavishly about the city for some days past.

Orders had gone out to take Tom Grattan dead or alive, and a file of soldiers was dispatched at once to the hotel where he put up.

They found the nest empty.

The bird had flown.

Great was the rage of the pasha when this fact was communicated to him.

He put all the machinery of the government in motion, for although his loss had been merely one of dollars and cents, it was a precedent that might prove costly in the future.

If a dog of an unbeliever could enter a harem and steal its choicest flower, what would they not attempt next?

Perhaps the Turkish detective force was not as much of a success as it might have been.

At any rate, they failed to discover the manner in which the fugitives left the city.

Suspicion fastened upon Antonio, since he was the skipper who had carried the Americans hither from Rome.

As his little vessel was passing through the straits he was boarded by Turkish officers, and the vessel searched from stem to stern.

Not a sign of the fugitives could be found, and the searching party was compelled to believe that they were not on board.

All the while Tom and his bride were hidden in the secret recess, and escaped discovery.

Meanwhile those of our friends who remained behind were objects of suspicion.

They knew they were followed about night and day by emissaries of the pasha.

It made them very uncomfortable to say the least.

Of course, since it was for Tom's sake, they could stand it.

The sooner they left Turkish soil the better for their peace of mind.

Still it would not do to hurry, as such action would arouse suspicion.

They went their way with the guide Tomas.

He took them to mosques and bazars, where none but true believers in Mahomet were allowed to enter the sacred structures.

Some they saw into, however.

Money is just as potent a power in the country of the Orient as our own.

It has a magic power that persuades men to do daring deeds, to betray trusts, and to accomplish wonders.

The time for their departure drew near.

They had already tired of Constantinople.

Its wonders had pleased them at first, but they soon palled upon the appetite.

What they wanted now was a change.

Perhaps by this time Tom had arrived at his destination, at least he had been favored by good weather while on the way.

Mr. Grimes made the arrangements for their sailing, as usual.

He was becoming quite an expert in this line.

The day arrived when they were to go.

A blue sky was overhead.

Everything looked beautiful, and it seemed as though they were about to bid good-bye to the land of the Crescent under favorable conditions.

The unlooked-for often happens.

Mr. Grimes never felt sure of anything until the last possible chance of losing it had gone.

They were to sail at three in the afternoon.

Mr. Grimes was the first to go down to the place where the steamer lay.

As he drew near he saw a man sitting upon a pile

of rope and in full view of the route intended passengers would have to take did they go aboard, though he would at the same time be partially hidden himself.

No sooner had the eyes of the Yankee detective fallen upon this man seated here, cross-legged like a Turk, than an electric shock seemed to pass through his entire frame.

That was because he knew him.

This person was one whose home was in far away Peru, who had traveled thousands of miles intent on revenge.

It was one of the thugs.

Mr. Grimes had let his carpet bag drop at sight of the fellow, for he was quite taken aback.

Was there no such thing as throwing these sleuth-hounds off the trail?

He had not been noticed.

It was a time when thought must be extremely rapid in order to work out a solution to the puzzle.

Luckily Grimes was just the man to grasp such a difficulty by the horns.

He conceived a desperate plan in three minutes, after dodging back so that the watcher might not by any means set eyes on him.

Turning, he made his way back to the caravan-sary, which he reached not a moment too soon.

Time was when the Turks did all their riding on foot or else rode donkeys.

Now carriages are in common use.

A vehicle stood at the door.

It was something between a Parisian cabriolet and a Russian drosky

The driver had placed a *leather portmanteau* and

a valise on top, while a gentleman was helping a lady to enter the vehicle.

It was the Irish Monte Cristo.

Mr. Grimes smiled.

Luck favored him.

He called out to attract Redmond's attention, and the latter, realizing that something must be wrong, waited outside.

In a few sentences the detective told what he had just witnessed, and O'Connor's brow grew black as a thunder cloud.

"Let them follow us. The next time any one of those devils crosses my path I'm going to give him a taste of this. I've stood it long enough," and he tapped the revolver in his pocket.

"Try their patience a little longer. I think I know how they can be baffled. If we get to Cairo we will have a week before the next steamer arrives, and by that time we can have visited the pyramids and lost ourselves—to them."

"True, sir. What do you propose?"

"Get into the vehicle. I'll sit beside the driver, and give him directions where to go."

Mr. Grimes had an idea.

He believed it was possible by means of the railroad, providing a train was going out soon toward the west, to reach a point many miles ahead on the course the steamer must take.

Here they could debark, and hire some sort of a boat to take them out to the steamer.

Such a course would baffle their foes, keen though they were, for a time at least.

Under the magic influence of good pay the driver stirred up his sluggish beasts.

They finally reached the station.

Here bad luck met them.

A train had left for the west just ten minutes before, and there would not be another for at least five hours.

This was discouraging.

O'Connor begged to see the official in charge.

That worthy was affable enough, and when Redmond offered to pay an enormous sum for a special engine and one carriage a short distance down the line, he ordered it out.

Turkish ways were so slow that our friends feared they might lose the steamer after all; but once the "special" started it made good time.

With what amazement many of the old Turks years ago must have witnessed the arrival of the first engine.

It seemed to be the death knell of their ancient institutions, which must decline now while the power of the civilized west crept in.

The reign of the Turk in Europe draws near an end.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MYSTERIOUS PASSENGER.

"This is what I call life," said Mr. Grimes, gayly, as the special, drawn by a puffing, panting old locomotive, at sight of which we would have turned up our hands in holy horror on this side of the Atlantic, went spinning along, leaving the city of the Turks far behind.

The day was glorious.

Overhead the sky was of that deep blue color which is generally spoken of in connection with Italian scenery, because it is more frequently seen there, though at times peculiar to even our changeable America.

A cool breeze stirred the tropical trees, birds caroled, and every little while glimpses could be seen through the foliage of the beautiful blue Marmora, glittering like a painted sea, the gem connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean.

How the Russians have for ages fought desperately for possession of Constantinople.

The monstrous empire is bounded on the east by the Pacific, the north by the Arctic, and the west by the Atlantic oceans.

Her south resting on the Black Sea, she has no outlet to the Mediterranean.

Hence her struggles to throw the Turk out of Europe, have caused some of the most desperate of wars from the Crimean down to the Turkish-Russo war of the seventies.

It was a fair scene.

Our tourists enjoyed it immensely.

They found they were making good time, and this satisfied them all.

Their destination was reached.

The engine having been paid for, all that remained now was to engage a boat.

After a little trouble this was done, and a sharp lookout kept for the steamer.

She came along some hours after night set in, and her lights could be seen far down the straits, as she advanced rapidly.

The water was not rough.

At the proper time our friends entered the boat and were rowed out in the steamer's track.

Their old friend, the moon, arose while they were making over the water.

That heavenly luminary looked as though she had been in an engagement of some sort, for one side was badly battered.

They afterward learned that the old fellow who owned the boat had taken them in completely, as he had to stop the steamer any way to hand in certain government papers.

It was his regular duty, and yet he made out as though it would be a tremendous task, and charged the hapless tourists a price about a third the value of his boat.

Thus wretched extortioners are come across in every land under the sun.

Human nature is pretty much the same the world over, it will be found.

The steamer came on.

They enjoyed the sight immensely, the shore of the famous straits being covered with trees, and the

breeze wafting the odor of aromatic spices and flowers across the water.

Finally the old Turkish boatman waved his lantern when the steamer came near.

She answered it with a whistle.

Then her motion ceased gradually until the boat was run up alongside.

When the officers on board—they were English, by the way—understood that their missing passengers had hired a special train, and headed them off, they conceived a greater admiration for American pluck than they had ever had before.

A means of getting them aboard was soon brought into application, a sort of swinging chair not unlike the old ducking stool, in which they used to drop women convicted of being common scolds into the water.

Soon all were aboard.

Our friends again felt their spirits rise.

Fortune had favored them another time, and they had a fair chance.

This was all they asked.

The steamer soon moved on again.

Seated on deck the little party congratulated each other on the success of their scheme.

Everything had worked well.

Sometimes, no matter how well we plan, a hitch occurs that throws all our calculations into a miserable heap.

Luck enters into every game.

Mr. Grimes knew this, and when in an adventure of this kind he made all connections, he felt especially proud.

They joked about that villainous heathen of a boatman who had deceived them so.

Presently they learned that they had been hoodwinked even worse.

The steamer put in at the port below, and lay there until the arrival of the regular train from the city.

Hence the obliging railroad officials, who could have told them this fact, had allowed them to hire an expensive "special," and told them to get off above, instead of coming down to this place.

"I'm glad we're out of the villainous country," said O'Connor, "they'd cheat you out of your boots even while you were awake."

Mr. Grimes laughed.

"I am generally accounted a shrewd man, and no doubt in my line that is true, but these foreigners can fleece me as easy as the veriest greenhorn. All you have to do is to grin and bear it. We suffer the common fate of tourists, and when they come to our land, I've no doubt sharp Yankees cheat them, too."

When they saw the steamer meant to stay here for some hours, our friends thought they might as well get some sleep.

So they sought their state-rooms.

Turkey fears England, and is generally servile before the cross of St. George.

Hence vessels flying the British flag have respect paid to them such as is not vouchsafed to any other individual nation.

Mr. Grimes slept soundly in spite of the noises that were heard.

He awoke when the vessel started again, but only to turn over and sleep.

In the morning all were on deck for a breath of fresh air before breakfast.

They were just passing out of the straits into the

blue Mediterranean, and the scene was about as lovely a one as could be imagined.

Again all seemed as happy as a marriage bell.

There was not a cloud upon the horizon, at least as far as mortal eye could see.

Breakfast was enjoyed by all.

They planned for the future.

Arriving at Cairo they would pass along and see the famous Alexandria, where the famous British bombardment took place, routing Arabi Pasha, and securing British influence in Egypt to this day.

Then they would ascend the Nile.

The pyramids and Sphinx would next claim their attention, and after that Jerusalem.

All this time they seemed to have forgotten the very existence of that band of thugs from the wilds of the Andes, whose one mission in life was to hunt them down.

It was apparently taken for granted that they had thrown these worthies off the track by this last clever trick.

We sometimes—indeed, very often—plan our future so beautifully, utterly unconscious of the tremendous earthquakes so near at hand.

Perhaps our ignorance is beneficial.

If we knew what the near future was to bring forth, who among us would have the heart to commence great schemes?

A merciful Providence veils the coming events, and leaves us in blissful ignorance of the impending disaster either near or far distant.

The day slipped away.

Our friends reviewed all that had been seen or done since leaving Rome.

Tom Grattan's adventure received the greatest share of their attention.

He was a favorite with all.

None of them had seen the face of the lovely girl who had enchained the bold Irishman, and made him risk his neck for her.

Katy was filled with feminine curiosity to look upon the charmer.

She had hardly seen the face of a single woman while in Constantinople, so jealously do the females hide their charming features.

Rest assured it is not according to any wish of theirs that this is done, but because the men have made a law to that effect.

She had heard much with regard to the beauty of the Circassian and Georgian girls, who are generally sold into the Turkish harem, and was anxious to see the face that had caught the chivalrous Irishman.

During the day Mr. Grimes made a discovery.

"We have another passenger on board," he said to the Irish Monte Cristo, just at evening, as they leaned over the rail forward, and watched the prow of the steamer plow up the water.

"I thought the captain told us last night we were his only passengers?"

"That was when we came aboard."

"Yes."

"It was true, then. This passenger must have come aboard at the fort on the straits."

"I see. The steamer makes it a point to wait there for any belated passenger, and this party was delayed like us, but knew enough to take the regular train, and not hire a whole railroad."

They both laughed at this.

The joke had been a pretty costly one, but money was the last thing this prince of millionaires bothered his head about.

He could not begin to spend the accumulating interest, much less make any impression on the gigantic sum representing his principal.

"What is he like?"

"I didn't say it was a man."

"Ah! a woman passenger, traveling alone. That's rather strange."

"There you are again, Mr. O'Connor, jumping at conclusions. I haven't seen the passenger, and only guess it is a man. The party occupies the next state-room to mine, and I heard him cough once. Besides, I got the odor of tobacco."

"Why the duse don't he come to his meals?"

"Sick, perhaps."

"Not on this smooth sea. It wouldn't make the poorest traveler squeamish. Besides, sick travelers don't generally hanker after a cigar."

"Right you are, sir."

"Seems to me there's something mysterious about this lone passenger."

The two looked at each other.

There was significance in that glance.

"Suppose you try and see what the party looks like, Mr. Grimes."

"Willingly. A chance will come before we reach Cairo, even if I have to bore a hole in the thin partition separating our rooms."

"Good."

"You suspect, what?"

"First, he may be a spy sent by that furious pasha Tom bedeviled, to discover if we meet Grattan in Cairo."

"Quite true."

"Then again he may prove to be one of our inveterate foes. They might have guessed at the nature of the trick we played them, and sent one of their number down to the fort on Bosphorus to learn if we had come aboard after the steamer sailed from Constantinople. When he heard how this had been done it was his business to send back word, and then stick to us like a leech."

"Well put, Mr. O'Connor. You'd make a good lawyer, I'm sure. All this is based upon the fact of his proving to be one of those men."

"Yes."

"Well, we will know the truth soon."

Mr. Grimes set to work.

He knew no such word as fail.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. GRIMES LAYS A DEEP PLOT.

From that time on Mr. Grimes devoted himself to this one task.

He really felt that his reputation was at stake in discovering the identity of the mysterious passenger.

After the evening meal had been eaten they sat on deck for a long time.

Mr. Grimes at length left O'Connor and his wife. He went below.

Noiselessly entering his state-room, which he had left unlocked on purpose, he listened to hear if any sound came from beyond.

Presently he heard some one open a door and pass into the cabin.

The mysterious passenger was going on deck to get a breath of fresh air.

All this seemed very suspicious.

Why should he act in this way?

There must be something back of it.

Soon Mr. Grimes also slipped out, and made his way toward the companion way. He saw that it was quite dark on deck.

Thus he was able to move about without being noticed, and soon discovered the party for whom he sought.

The lone passenger was walking up and down a certain part of the deck.

His step was quick and nervous.

A broad-brimmed felt hat covered his head.

He also wore a cloak, the large collar of which was turned up about his neck.

Identification under the circumstances was simply impossible.

Still Mr. Grimes did not give up.

He bided his time.

It would not always be thus.

The opportunity he desired would come at length, and he must be ready to take advantage of it.

He watched the dark figure.

Up and down the mysterious passenger walked for almost a full hour.

The detective remembered that the man would have to pass a light on the way to the cabin.

As there was no use remaining on deck longer he went and stationed himself there.

Patience.

His man would soon come.

Perhaps he would be able to discover the other's identity then.

One good look at his face was all he desired.

Would he get it?

Hark! some one came.

Mr. Grimes was on the alert.

It proved to be the captain of the steamer, on his way to the cabin.

A false alarm.

Again, patience.

Finally he was rewarded—footsteps sounded, and the man in the cloak appeared.

As he drew near the light he deliberately put up his hand and drew the brim of his felt hat far down over his eyes.

Neatly done.

Even the foiled detective could not but feel an admiration for the man who thus baffled him.

Each successive defeat only made him the more determined in the matter.

He would know yet who this man was, and what his mission here.

There were more ways of attempting this than would enter into the philosophy of most men.

Mr. Grimes, being a veteran detective, knew a trick or two, you may be sure.

He quietly entered his room.

There he set to work.

With a small instrument he bored a hole in the partition.

This could be enlarged if he found he had struck the right spot.

The ship's timbers groaned and creaked somewhat, for the wind and waves had arisen with the going down of the sun.

All this noise, so customary on board a steamer, would serve to deaden any sound he might make in thus using a gimlet.

Soon the hole was made.

Light came through.

He knew from this that he had selected a proper place to make his trial.

Another instrument was introduced.

He worked slowly.

The game was worth the candle.

At the end of a short time he found he had the hole large enough.

Then he applied his eye to it.

Again disappointment.

He saw across the state-room, and any one coming

within range of his vision must have been readily identified if known to him.

Just as he realized this his vision was suddenly obscured, as though some object had been clapped over the hole.

This was not so.

The mysterious passenger in the adjoining state-room had simply "doused the glim," or, in plain English, extinguished his light.

Thus was the indefatigable detective cheated a second time of his prey.

Did he give it up? Not much. He simply took off his outer clothes, and crawled into his bunk to sleep, not lighting his candle, because the little hole was open, and would be betrayed to his strange neighbor by the arrow of light.

Mr. Grimes awoke.

He heard the bells of the vessel sound, and realized that it was three o'clock.

The steamer was pitching at a lively rate, and Mr. Grimes was by this time enough of a sailor to know that she must have encountered head winds and quite a sea. This would retard her progress some.

He turned in his bunk, having been lying with his face to the wall.

As he did so a gleam of light struck his eyes.

It came from the hole in the wall.

Somehow it sent an electric thrill through the frame of the old detective.

He realized that his chance had come.

Why had the unknown passenger relit his candle?

Was he sick?

Perhaps he was fearful lest a storm might burst upon them, and, like humanity everywhere, hated to meet it in the dark.

Whatever his motive was, Mr. Grimes did not care a particle.

It served his purpose.

He quickly made his way across the little room.

Once he had to sink to the floor to avoid being pitched headlong against the partition.

It was only a few steps from the bunk to the other wall, and he reached it without accident.

Then his eye was glued to the hole.

He had gauged the height from the arrangement in his own state-room.

The hole came between the two bunks.

For perhaps half a minute Mr. Grimes crouched there, with legs spread out to brace him against any sudden dip of the vessel.

Then he gave a grunt.

What did that signify?

Had he made a discovery?

Turning away from the hole, Mr. Grimes took a small wad of paper, and filled the cavity.

Chuckling, he crawled into his bunk again, and in ten minutes was sound asleep, despite the rolling and pitching of the vessel.

Morning came.

Our three friends gathered at the table with the officers of the steamer.

The mysterious passenger had his meals in his private state-room.

Mr. Grimes waited.

Half of the morning had passed away before he was able to see Redmond alone.

There was no need of alarming the wife of O'Connor, she had had trouble enough.

The Irish Monte Cristo knew something was in the wind.

He could see it in the other's manner.

Smoking, they again sought the vessel's prow, where they could see her dip into each wave that came along.

"Well, what is it?"

"I've found out who our passenger is."

"Ah! who can he be?"

"Guess."

"Any one I know?"

"Yes."

"Let's see—Gonzales?"

"By Jove! you're a wizard, Mr. O'Connor."

"Then it is that man?"

"Without a doubt."

"Tell me how you found this out."

Mr. Grimes did so.

The other could not but admire the pluck that had carried the battle to victory.

As the situation was anything but pleasant, he soon came around to the old query:

"What are we going to do about it?"

"Leave it to me."

"That man ought to be got rid of."

"I'll promise you one thing—he won't follow us from Cairo—perhaps he will never reach there."

"You have a scheme?"

"Several of them."

"Confide in me."

"Suppose he reaches Cairo—I shall hire a gang to hold him for a week."

"It can be done?"

"Anything can be accomplished with money, as you very well know, sir."

"What else?"

"This is something of a trading vessel. We stop

at several ports in our roundabout way to Cairo. I have a plan in mind which can be put into practice under favorable auspices."

He did not say what it was.

They soon found that the spray occasionally flew over the spot where they stood.

Hence they retreated further aft.

As the day advanced the storm increased, and the vessel labored hard.

She was not a crack steamer by any means, though perhaps good enough for her trade.

The captain, finding himself driven in near shore, decided to make for a harbor near by, and this was reached about four o'clock.

They were now in quiet water.

After the buffeting of the storm this was very acceptable, and all enjoyed it.

Mr. Grimes was on the alert.

He saw several boats put off from the town, having enterprising Greeks aboard who desired to sell the passengers something.

Mr. Grimes picked out his man.

He took him aside, and had a long talk.

Some money was passed over, and more promised.

O'Connor watched him.

He believed the detective was making some arrangements with this Greek sailor.

All would be known in good time.

The sailor finally rowed away.

Mr. Grimes sought the captain.

"What do you think of the weather, sir?"

"Wind is shifting—sea will go down rapidly. No doubt in the world but that we will leave here at break of day."

This news pleased Mr. Grimes.

It agreed with his plans exactly.

When Katy had gone below, about nine o'clock, the old detective took his patron by the arm.

"Light up a cigar, and have a walk on deck."

"I thought of retiring."

"I wouldn't if I were you," significantly.

O'Connor looked at him closely.

"Why not?"

"I need your help."

"The duse you do."

"The time has come."

"For getting rid of that rascally thug?"

"Yes."

"Then count me in."

He struck a wind-proof match, and lit his cigar.

CHAPTER XXV

CONCLUSION.

"Now tell me your plan of campaign."

"It is very simple. I have hired that Greek boatman to be on hand under the large port in my state-room at exactly midnight. The moon will rise before one, so when he comes the darkness must quite conceal him."

"Go on," eagerly.

"We will then be rid of our enemy, who will be obliged to lay over here some days or weeks."

"But, goodness alive, man, you don't think he will consent to go with the boatman."

Mr. Grimes coolly knocked the ashes from the end of his cigar with his little finger.

"I don't intend to ask him."

"Well?"

"He must go in a senseless condition."

"How can that be arranged?"

"This way. When he was out of his room I entered and fastened a strong black thread to the bull's-eye that swings shut in the port-hole, which thread I passed through to my room.

"When the time is ripe a gentle, steady pull on that thread closes his only means of ventilation.

"Then I have a means of ejecting an odor through the hole in the wall that, inhaled by a sleeping person, will render them insensible for hours."

"Chloroform?"

"That is one of the ingredients."

"After that all will be easy."

"Yes. We can enter his state-room, and pass him out to the boatman, who will keep him secure until after the steamer leaves."

"What does he believe?"

"I told him this man was a Russian spy, having learned that he hated the natives of the White Czar's domains, having suffered in some way from their severity. He is only too glad to pay off his old grudge and receive a fat price besides."

"Mr. Grimes, I've said it before, but I repeat it vehemently, you are a wonderful man, and I hope you'll remain with me the rest of my life, wanting for nothing. Act the part of my private secretary in truth—handle my funds as you please, but watch over me and mine. Will you promise to stay?"

"I see no reason why I should not, sir. I have become so much attached to you and your good wife now, and so interested in your fortunes, that I should hate to think of parting. Besides, where could I do as well?"

"Shake hands on it, Mr. Private Secretary."

They talked longer.

Time passed.

O'Connor consulted his watch at the binnacle light.

"After eleven."

The night was dark.

Although the wind had almost died down, the waves of the great sea still lashed the rocks outside the snug Grecian harbor.

Around them the only sounds were the lapping of the little wavelets against the steamer's hull, or the creaking of a mast.

"Time I was at work. Come below with me. Once we enter my state-room not a word only in a whisper."

They went below.

Mr. Grimes pulled the wad of paper out of the small hole in the partition.

He put his ear to it.

His practiced hearing soon enabled him to catch the measured breathing of a person asleep.

All promised well.

He groped around for the black thread.

This passed out of his port hole and into that of the adjoining state-room.

Gently but firmly pulling upon it, he had the satisfaction of closing the bull's-eye.

All was now ready.

Mr. Grimes took up a small affair, and inserted a tube in the hole in the partition.

Then he turned a diminutive valve.

A slight hissing sound ensued, not enough to arouse an ordinary sleeper, and certainly not under such circumstances as these.

This was the gas escaping.

It now became only a question of time.

Mr. Grimes counted to himself, having figured beforehand how long he ought to hold out.

Finally he again turned the wheel of the valve.

The hissing ceased.

"He is now utterly oblivious to mundane affairs. In the words of some accomplished scholar he 'don't care whether school keeps or not.' "

"But how are we to get hold of him?"

"I can open the door."

"Yes, but the gas?"

"Wait."

Going to his own window, Mr. Grimes climbed out without the slightest hesitation.

He had made all his calculations beforehand.

There was a place he could rest his feet on some four feet below.

It was an easy task for one as agile as himself to slip along and push open the bull's-eye of the next state-room, pulling off the black thread at the same time.

Then he went back.

A short time later and he touched his companion on the arm.

"Hark! I hear a sound beyond there. I believe it is the Greek boatman feeling his way along the side of the steamer."

This proved to be a fact.

The man was signaled.

He stopped just below.

It was as black as a pocket, and yet he could see anything above him, outlined against the sky.

"I've changed my mind, and will leave the door locked on the inside, as I can enter through the port-hole just as well."

"Do you want my help?"

"You had better come."

They had no difficulty in entering the adjoining state-room, and Mr. Grimes lit the candle.

There, on the bunk, lay the dark-featured foreigner, the man they knew as Gonzales, one of the thugs from the Andes.

Mr. Grimes smiled.

He had made no mistake with regard to the effect produced by his gas.

The man was unconscious.

He lay there as incapable of action as a dead man, and yet his body lacked the rigidity of a corpse, and could be readily moved.

They lost no time.

Making sure the boatman was below, they passed out the thug to him.

All was successfully done, and without any noise that would have attracted attention.

The man had a small satchel.

This Mr. Grimes also gave over to the Greek, with instructions to hand it to the other when about to let him go free.

"That is all."

The balance of the sum agreed upon was handed down to the boatman, who took Mr. Grimes' hand, and pressed it warmly.

Then they knew he had pushed off.

Presently they heard the sound of distant dips in the water and turning of oars in the thole-pins.

Their enemy had gone.

The two men shook hands with each other, blew out the candle, climbed into Mr. Grimes' state-room, and half an hour later the detective was enjoying a sound sleep.

He felt that he had earned it.

Morning came.

When Mr. Grimes reached the deck they were miles out at sea, and headed on their course.

Would the absence of the thug be soon noticed?

At breakfast our friends chatted gayly.

About noon the captain, a jolly Britisher, called Mr. Grimes over to him.

"A strange thing has happened."

"Eh?"

"Our steward reports that the other passenger we had on board is missing. He left the vessel when we lay in the harbor."

"Very probably."

"By the way, Mr. Grimes, there are sharks in this water."

"Indeed," with a suspicious glance.

"If you had fallen overboard last night we might have missed your number at our mess. That strip was a beastly narrow footing."

The cat was out of the bag.

It was evident the captain knew what they had been up to.

Mr. Grimes came to a determination.

"Captain, let me tell you the whole story. Then if you blame us for sending that man ashore, I'm willing to make any amends possible."

"Spoken like a man, sir."

"Have a cigar. Now let's get where we will not be interrupted. I think I can entertain you for an hour or so with as exciting a series of adventures as ever a novelist dreamed of."

"Come to my room on deck here."

They were soon safe from intrusion.

Mr. Grimes started at the beginning with the troubles and adventures of Redmond O'Connor in Ireland, his escape from a British prison, flight to America, the search in company with Grattan for the long lost treasure of the Incas, and the series of surprising adventures that had followed their successful flight with the untold wealth that for centuries had lain in the heart of the Andes.

He dwelt upon the cruel nature of the heartless men who followed the lucky explorers—how they had attempted murder in every shape.

When he had finished, the captain lit a fresh cigar, and then deliberately shook hands with him.

"Tell me, now, captain, did we do wrong in putting that bloodthirsty devil ashore last night?"

"No, a thousand times no. It would have served him right if you had dropped him into the water. It's what he would have done with you."

"I know, but he has some show of right on his side, you see, and that makes a difference."

"I'm glad he's gone. I never did like his looks, and had a suspicion he was up to something when he did not come to the table, yet devoured good meals in his own room. I must confess I presumed he was some political fugitive."

Mr. Grimes was glad to have the captain's approbation placed upon his act.

It freed him from much uneasiness.

He sought the Irish Monte Cristo, and brought him, together with Katy, to the captain, who was pleased to shake hands with them again, since he had heard of their wonderful adventures.

So the steamer plowed her way through the blue waters of the Mediterranean, bound for the far away Egyptian port.

Their voyage promised to be pleasant, the last storm having cleared the atmosphere.

Life seemed full of golden promise, and the future, as seen through the conjugal spectacles, was one of unalloyed bliss for Redmond and his bride.

If there were clouds threatening to obscure the sun that shone upon them, they did not see their dark outlines.

The present was bright—the future must take care of itself.

Mr. Grimes lolled about the deck watching the flying fish lift their bright sides and skim over the surface of the blue waters.

How lovely it seemed.

“And to-morrow the captain says we shall bring up and anchor at Cairo.”

Katy's brow showed signs of trouble, but her apprehensions faded when other thoughts came.

“We shall see Tom, and Mrs. Tom. I do wonder what she can be like to have captured his flinty old heart. I am prepared to love her, too,” she declared enthusiastically.

Here we will leave them, with their haven almost in sight, and the sea calm around them.

Perhaps other storms would come upon them, and Mr. Grimes' ingenuity be called into play in order to extricate them from the difficulties a Monte Cristo is bound to meet, so that it may be we shall see them again ere long.

[THE END.]

SEA AND SHORE SERIES.

Stories of Strange Adventures Afloat and Ashore.

ISSUED MONTHLY.

All Books in this Series are Fully Illustrated.

The above-named series is issued in clear, large type, uniform in size with "The Select Series," and will consist of the most thrilling and ingeniously constructed stories, by popular and experienced writers in the field of fiction. The following books are now ready :

- No. 13.—THEIRISH MONTE CRISTO ABROAD**, by Alexander Robertson, M.D.
No. 12.—MEZZONI, THE BRIGAND, by Lieutenant Murray.
No. 11.—THE IRISH MONTE CRISTO'S SEARCH, by Alexander Robertson, M. D.
No. 10.—LA TOSCA, from the celebrated play, by Victorien Sardou.
No. 9.—THE MAN IN BLUE, by Mary A. Denison.
No. 8.—BEN HAMED, by Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
No. 7.—A SERVANT OF SATAN.
No. 6.—THE MASKED LADY, by Lieutenant Murray.
No. 5.—THEODORA, from the celebrated play, by Victorien Sardou.
No. 4.—THE LOCKSMITH OF LYONS, by Prof. Wm. Henry Peck.
No. 3.—THE BROWN PRINCESS, by Mrs. M. V. Victor.
No. 2.—THE SILVER SHIP, by Lewis Leon.
No. 1.—AN IRISH MONTE CRISTO, by John Sherman.
-

Price, 25 Cents.

For sale by all Booksellers and News agents, or will be sent, postage free, to any address in the United States or Canada, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. BOX, 2734. 31 ROSE STREET, NEW YORK.

THE SEA AND SHORE SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT NOVELS,
BY NOTABLE AUTHORS.

NO. 4.
THE LOCKSMITH OF LYONS;
OR,
THE WEAVER'S WAR.

By PROFESSOR WM. HENRY PECK,

AUTHOR OF

**"Marlin Marduke," "£15,000 Reward," "Siballa,
the Sorceress," etc.**

From the very opening paragraph this powerful and intensely exciting romance enchains the attention and keeps curiosity constantly active. The scene opens in the manufacturing center of Lyons, during a troublesome period in her history, when the laboring classes strove to maintain their rights against the nobility. The hero, whom fate has made an humble workman, finds opportunity for the display of those self-asserting qualities, which always force their possessor to the front in every contest. While most of the action is thrilling and dramatic, a captivating love episode is adroitly interwoven with the main thread of the romance. The mystery appertaining to the early life of the Locksmith, the appalling accusation which makes him the victim of unseen foes, his fortitude in the most trying positions, and his final vindication and reward, are forcibly and sympathetically set forth in this well constructed story.

PRICE, 25 CENTS.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
P. O. Box, 2734. 31 ROSE STREET, New York.

The Sea and Shore Series
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT NOVELS
By Notable Authors.

NO. 8.
BEN HAMED;
OR,
THE CHILDREN OF FATE.

A STORY OF THE EASTERN WORLD.

By SYLVANUS COBB, Jr.,
AUTHOR OF
"The King's Talisman," "The Gunmaker of Moscow."



This delightful Oriental romance recalls the fascinating stories of the "Arabian Nights," without their supernatural effects. Indeed, our old friend Haroun Al Raschid figures prominently in this work, and is closely identified with the hero and heroine—the devoted Assad and the fair Morgiana. There is nothing strained or unnatural in the story; it is a romance of pure love, captivating and elevating in the highest sense.

A number of strong characters combine with Ben Hamed and Abdalla in the solution of an ingenious and cleverly sustained plot.

Price, 25 Cents.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 ROSE STREET, New York.

ANOTHER MAN'S WIFE.

An Entrancing Emotional Story,

By BERTHA M. CLAY.

No. 1 of the Primrose Edition of Copyright Novels.

Cloth. Price, \$1.

SOME OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Messrs. Street & Smith, New York, begin a new series of novels—"The Primrose Library"—with "Another Man's Wife," by Bertha M. Clay. The story has enough plot to keep one from falling asleep over it, and it also indicates the stumbling-blocks and pitfalls which abound everywhere for young husbands and wives who think so much about having "a good time" that they have no time left in which to think about reputation and character.—*N. Y. Herald*, Sept. 10.

Street & Smith publish the American copyright novel, "Another Man's Wife," by Bertha M. Clay. It deals with certain corrupting influences of fashionable society, and impressively warns of the dangers that spring from them. Its plot is strong and dramatic, and is elaborated with all of the qualities of style that have made the author so popular. It is the first issue of the new Primrose Series.—*Boston Globe*, Sept. 16.

"Another Man's Wife," by Bertha M. Clay, Street & Smith's Primrose Series, is a laudable effort toward the repression of the growing evil of matrimonial disloyalty. The book is handsomely bound, with a holiday look about it.—*Brooklyn Eagle*, Sept. 15.

Street & Smith of New York publish in cloth cover "Another Man's Wife," by Bertha M. Clay. The story is effective. It impressively depicts the results certain to attend the sins of deception. It teaches a lesson that will not be lost upon those thoughtless men and women who, only intent upon pleasure, little dream of the pitfall before them, and to which they are blind until exposure wrecks happiness.—*Troy (N. Y.) Press*.

Street & Smith, New York, have brought out in book-form "Another Man's Wife." This is one of Bertha M. Clay's most effective stories.—*Cincinnati Enquirer*.

"Another Man's Wife." This is one of Bertha M. Clay's most effective stories. It forcibly and impressively portrays the evils certain to attend matrimonial deceit, clandestine interviews, and all the tricks and devices which imperil a wife's honor. It has a novel and entrancingly interesting plot, and abounds in vivid and dramatic incidents. It is the first issue of Street & Smith's Primrose Edition of Copyright Novels, and will not appear elsewhere.—*Franklin Freeman*.

THE
MERRY-MAKER
ALMANAC.

MAILED FREE TO ANY ADDRESS.

Very Comic---Full of Pictures.

Will Drive the Blues out of a Bag
of Indigo.

Be sure to send for this. Write your
name on a postal card and mail the same
to us, and receive this Almanac FREE.
Address,

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,
31 Rose Street, New York.

WOMEN'S SECRETS

The public are at last permitted to take a peep into the wonderful and mysterious art of

“HOW TO BE BEAUTIFUL.”

We will soon become a nation of Beauty. Read how, in the table of

CONTENTS :

THE VALUE OF PERSONAL BEAUTY.—This chapter relates to the beauty in “Genius,” “Strength,” “Religion,” “Poetry,” and “Chivalry.”

THE HISTORY OF BEAUTY.—Mode of acquiring it by the people of different nations. What people are the most beautiful?

VARIOUS STANDARDS OF BEAUTY.—Tastes of civilized and uncivilized people. The French definition of beauty.

THE BEST STANDARDS OF BEAUTY.—Defines the Head, Hair, Eyes, Cheeks, Ears, Nose, Mouth, Bosom, Limbs, and in fact every part of the human form.

HOW TO RAISE BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN.—To newly married people, and those who contemplate entering the conjugal state, this chapter alone is well worth the price of the book.

HOW TO BE BEAUTIFUL.—This chapter is full of information, as it not only tells how to beautify every part of the form and features, but gives recipes and cures for all the ailments which tend to mar or blemish.

BEAUTY SLEEP.—To be beautiful it is not necessary to be like the bird that seeks its nest at sunset and goes forth again at sunrise. You will here find the required time to be spent in bed, the positions most conducive to health, facts regarding ventilation, bed-clothes, adornments, and other useful hints.

BEAUTY FOOD.—Instructs how, when, and where to eat, and also treats of Digestion, Complexion, Foods which color the skin, etc.

HOW TO BE FAT.—The information imparted in this chapter will be a boon to thin, delicate women, as it tells what to eat and what to avoid, also what to drink and how to dress when plumpness is desirable.

HOW TO BE LEAN.—If corpulent women will carefully follow the instructions herein, they will be happy and enjoy life.

BEAUTY BATHING AND EXERCISE.—This chapter is intended for *every one* to read and profit by. There is no truer saying than “Cleanliness is next to godliness.”

EFFECTS OF MENTAL EMOTIONS ON BEAUTY.—After you read this, we feel safe in saying that you will not give way to anger, surprise, fright, grief, vexation, etc., but will at all times strive to be cheerful and make the best of life.

HOW BEAUTY IS DESTROYED.—The women are warned in this chapter against quack doctors and their nostrums, the dangers of overdosing, and irregular habits.

HOW TO REMAIN BEAUTIFUL.—It is just as easy for those that are beautiful to remain so as to allow themselves to fade away like a flower which only blooms for a season.

HOW TO ACQUIRE GRACE AND STYLE.—Without grace and style beauty is lost. They are as essential as a beautiful face. To walk ungainfully or awkwardly is not only vulgar but detrimental to the health.

THE LANGUAGE OF BEAUTY.—This chapter will enable you to read a person and learn his or her character, without the use of a phrenological chart.

CORSETS.—When and what kind should be worn. How they were originated, and by whom.

CYCLING.—The latest craze for ladies is fully described in this chapter.

WOMEN'S SECRETS; or, How to be Beautiful.

THE BEST SELLING BOOK OF THE DAY.

Just Out. Price 25 Cents.

For Sale by all Newsdealers.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,

31 Rose Street.

THE NUGGET LIBRARY.

ISSUED EVERY THURSDAY.

PRICE, 5 CENTS EACH.

- No. 1—SMART ALECK ; or, A Crank's Legacy. By Frank.
- No. 2—UNDER THE GULF ; or, The Strange Voyage of the
Torpedo Boat. By Harry St. George.
- No. 3—BOUNCER BROWN ; or, He was Bound to Find His
Father. By Commodore Ah-Look.
- No. 4—THE GAYEST BOY IN NEW YORK ; or, Adventures by
Gaslight. By Dash Kingston.
- No. 5—NIMBLE NIP ; or, The Call Boy of the Olympic Theater.
By John A. Mack.
- No. 6—THE FLOATING ACADEMY ; or, Terrible Secrets of Dr.
Switchem's School-Ship. By Dash Dale.
- No. 7—THE CRIMSON TRAIL ; or, On Custer's Last War-path.
By Buffalo Bill.
-

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,

P. O. Box 2734.

31 ROSE STREET, New York.

THE LOG CABIN LIBRARY.

Issued Every Thursday.

PRICE, 10 CENTS EACH.

- No. 1.—**THE WHITE CAPS**, by Marline Manly.
No. 2.—**THE KEWANEE BANK ROBBERY**, by J. R. Musick.
No. 3.—**SEVEN PICKED MEN**, by Judson R. Taylor.
No. 4.—**JESSE, THE OUTLAW**, a story of the James Boys, by Captain
Jake Shackelford.
No. 5.—**THE WHITE CAP DETECTIVE**, by Marline Manly.
No. 6.—**CAPTAIN KATE**, by Leander P. Richardson.
No. 7.—**THE FINERY DEN DETECTIVE**, by Mark Merrick, Esq.
No. 8.—**BILL TREDEGAR**, a tale of the Moonshiners, by Ned Buntline.
No. 9.—**THE IRISH JUDAS; or, The Great Conspiracy Against Par-**
nell, by Clarence Clancool.
No. 10.—**THE GOLD-HUNTER DETECTIVE**, by Marline Manly.
No. 11.—**THE OKLAHOMA DETECTIVE**, by Old Broadbrim.
No. 12.—**THE MINER DETECTIVE**, by Ned Buntline.
No. 13.—**HARRY LOVELL, THE GENTLEMAN RIDER**, by Sherwood
Stanley.
No. 14.—**DIAMOND DICK IN ARIZONA**, by Delta Calaveras.
No. 15.—**THE GREAT CRONIN MYSTERY**, by Mark Merrick, Esq.
No. 16.—**THE JOHNSTOWN HERO**, by Marline Manly.
No. 17.—**SILVER MASK**, by Delta Calaveras.
No. 18.—**THE OYSTER PIRATES**, by Eugene T. Sawyer.
No. 19.—**LOUISVILLE LUKE, THE JOCKEY WONDER**, by Jack Howard.
No. 20.—**GIUSEPPE, THE WEASEL**, by Eugene T. Sawyer.
No. 21.—**CATTLE KATE**, by Lieutenant Carlton.
No. 22.—**OLD MAN HOWE**, by Wm. O. Woodward.
No. 23.—**PHENOMENAL PAUL, THE WIZARD PITCHER OF THE**
LEAGUE, by John Warden.
No. 24.—**THE SHANGHAIR OF GREENWICH STREET**, by Henry
Deering.
No. 25.—**DARROW, THE FLOATING DETECTIVE**, by Ned Buntline.
No. 26.—**HUGO, THE FIGHTER**, by William H. Bushnell.
No. 27.—**JACK THE PEEPER**, by Harry Temple.
No. 28.—**THE GREAT YACHT RACE**, by Marline Manly.
No. 29.—**THE LIGHTS O' GOTHAM**, by Ralph Royal.
No. 30.—**SHADOWED AND TRAPPED; or, Harry the Sport**, by Ned
Buntline.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,

P. O. BOX 2734.

31 ROSE STREET NEW YORK.

Do You Like Detective Stories ?

You will find the Very Best, by Authors of First-class
Ability, in the

Secret Service Series,

(S. S. S.)

ISSUED MONTHLY.

This series is enjoying a larger sale than any similar series ever published. None but American authors are represented on our list, and the books are all copyrighted, and can be had only in the "Secret Service."

LATEST ISSUES—FULLY ILLUSTRATED.

- No. 25.—THE NAVAL DETECTIVE, by Ned Buntline.
- No. 24.—THE PRAIRIE DETECTIVE, by Leander P. Richardson.
- No. 23.—A MYSTERIOUS CASE, by K. F. Hill.
- No. 22.—THE SOCIETY DETECTIVE, by Oscar Maitland.
- No. 21.—THE AMERICAN MARQUIS, by Nick Carter.
- No. 20.—THE MYSTERY OF A MADSTONE, by K. F. Hill.
- No. 19.—THE SWORDSMAN OF WARSAW, by Tony Pastor.
- No. 18.—A WALL STREET HAUL, by Nick Carter.
- No. 17.—THE OLD DETECTIVE'S PUPIL, by Nick Carter.
- No. 16.—THE MOUNTAINEER DETECTIVE, by Clayton W. Cobb.
- No. 15.—TOM AND JERRY, by Tony Pastor.
- No. 14.—THE DETECTIVE'S CLEW, by "Old Hutch."
- No. 13.—DARKE DARRELL, by Frank H. Stauffer.
- No. 12.—THE DOG DETECTIVE, by Lieutenant Murray.
- No. 11.—THE MALTESE CROSS, by Eugene T. Sawyer.
- No. 10.—THE POST-OFFICE DETECTIVE, by Geo. W. Goode.
- No. 9.—OLD MORTALITY, by Young Baxter.
- No. 8.—LITTLE LIGHTNING, by Police Captain James.
- No. 7.—THE CHOSEN MAN, by "Old Sleuth."
- No. 6.—OLD STONEWALL, by "Old Sleuth."
- No. 5.—THE MASKED DETECTIVE, by "Old Sleuth."
- No. 4.—THE TWIN DETECTIVES, by K. F. Hill.
- No. 3.—VAN, THE GOVERNMENT DETECTIVE, by "Old Sleuth."
- No. 2.—BRUCE ANGELO, by "Old Sleuth."
- No. 1.—BRANT ADAMS, by "Old Sleuth."

Price, 25 Cents Each.

For sale by all Newsdealers, or will be sent by mail on receipt of price by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH, New York.

The Select Series.

A SEMI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION

DEVOTED TO GOOD READING IN AMERICAN FICTION.

Price, 25 Cents Each.

FULLY ILLUSTRATED.

- No. 28—A HEART'S IDOL, by Bertha M. Clay.
- No. 27—WINIFRED, by Mary Kyle Dallas.
- No. 26—FONTELROY, by Francis A. Durivage.
- No. 25—THE KING'S TALISMAN, by Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.
- No. 24—THAT DOWDY, by Mrs. Georgie Sheldon.
- No. 23—DENMAN THOMPSON'S OLD HOMESTEAD.
- No. 22—A HEART'S BITTERNESS, by Bertha M. Clay.
- No. 21—THE LOST BRIDE, by Clara Augusta.
- No. 20—INGOMAR, by Nathan D. Urner.
- No. 19—A LATE REPENTANCE, by Mrs. Mary A. Denison.
- No. 18—ROSAMOND, by Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.
- No. 17—THE HOUSE OF SECRETS, by Mrs. Harriet Lewis.
- No. 16—SIBYL'S INFLUENCE, by Mrs. Georgie Sheldon.
- No. 15—THE VIRGINIA HEIRESS, by May Agnes Fleming.
- No. 14—FLORENCE FALKLAND, by Burke Brentford.
- No. 13—THE BRIDE ELECT, by Annie Ashmore.
- No. 12—THE PHANTOM WIFE, by Mrs. M. V. Victor.
- No. 11—BADLY MATCHED, by Helen Corwin Pierce.
- No. 10—OCTAVIA'S PRIDE, by Charles T. Manners.
- No. 9—THE WIDOW'S WAGER, by Rose Ashleigh.
- No. 8—WILL SHE WIN? by Emma Garrison Jones.
- No. 7—GRATIA'S TRIALS, by Lucy Randall Comfort.
- No. 6—A STORMY WEDDING, by Mary E. Bryan.
- No. 5—BRUNETTE AND BLONDE, by Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.
- No. 4—BONNIE JEAN, by Mrs. E. Burke Collins.
- No. 3—VELLA VERNELL, by Mrs. Sumner Hayden.
- No. 2—A WEDDED WIDOW, by T. W. Hanshew.
- No. 1—THE SENATOR'S BRIDE, by Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.

The above works are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postpaid, on receipt of price, 25 cents each, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,

P. O. Box 2734.

31 Rose Street, New York.

THE SELECT SERIES

OF

Popular American Copyright Stories,

BY NOTABLE AUTHORS.

NO. 15.

The Virginia Heiress

By MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,

AUTHOR OF

"Guy Earls court's Wife," "A Wonderful Woman,"
"One Night's Mystery,"

A tame story has never come from the vigorous and versatile pen of May Agnes Fleming. "The Virginia Heiress" is a pleasantly written, yet powerful and life-like narrative of a flesh-and-blood heroine, who talks and acts as many self-willed beauties are inclined to talk and act. It is the short-lived romantic dream of a young woman of culture and refinement, accustomed to all the luxuries of wealth, whose mental vision at first does not range beyond the rose-colored haze of the honey-moon; but she at length descends from the clouds of the lovers' dreamland, with eyes wide open, and stares this startling fact clearly in the face—she has married a poor man! He is not only poor—far worse than that; he is the associate of "men who dress for dinner by taking off their coats and dining in their shirt-sleeves."

PRICE, 25 CENTS.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,

P. O. Box: 2734.

31 Rose Street, New York.

DENMAN THOMPSON'S OLD HOMESTEAD.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES No. 23.

Price, 25 Cents.

Some Opinions of the Press.

"As the probabilities are remote of the play 'The Old Homestead' being seen anywhere but in large cities it is only fair that the story of the piece should be printed. Like most stories written from plays it contains a great deal which is not said or done on the boards, yet it is no more verbose than such a story should be, and it gives some good pictures of the scenes and people who for a year or more have been delighting thousands nightly. Uncle Josh, Aunt Tilda, Old Cy Prime, Reuben, the mythical Bill Jones, the sheriff and all the other characters are here, beside some new ones. It is to be hoped that the book will make a large sale, not only on its merits, but that other play owners may feel encouraged to let their works be read by the many thousands who cannot hope to see them on the stage."—*N. Y. Herald*, June 2d.

"Denman Thompson's 'The Old Homestead' is a story of clouds and sunshine alternating over a venerable home; of a grand old man, honest and blunt, who loves his honor as he loves his life, yet suffers the agony of the condemned in learning of the deplorable conduct of a wayward son; a story of country life, love and jealousy, without an impure thought, and with the healthy flavor of the fields in every chapter. It is founded on Denman Thompson's drama of 'The Old Homestead.'"—*N. Y. Press*, May 26th.

"Messrs. Street & Smith, publishers of the *New York Weekly*, have brought out in book-form the story of 'The Old Homestead,' the play which, as produced by Mr. Denman Thompson, has met with such wondrous success. It will probably have a great sale, thus justifying the foresight of the publishers in giving the drama this permanent fiction form."—*N. Y. Morning Journal*, June 2d.

"The popularity of Denman Thompson's play of 'The Old Homestead' has encouraged Street & Smith, evidently with his permission, to publish a good-sized novel with the same title, set in the same scenes and including the same characters and more too. The book is a fair match for the play in the simple good taste and real ability with which it is written. The publishers are Street & Smith, and they have gotten the volume up in cheap popular form."—*N. Y. Graphic*, May 29.

"Denman Thompson's play, 'The Old Homestead,' is familiar, at least by reputation, to every play-goer in the country. Its truth to nature and its simple pathos have been admirably preserved in this story, which is founded upon it and follows its incidents closely. The requirements of the stage make the action a little hurried at times, but the scenes described are brought before the mind's eye with remarkable vividness, and the portrayal of life in the little New England town is almost perfect. Those who have never seen the play can get an excellent idea of what it is like from the book. Both are free from sentimentality and sensation, and are remarkably healthy in tone."—*Albany Express*.

"Denman Thompson's 'Old Homestead' has been put into story-form and is issued by Street & Smith. The story will somewhat explain to those who have not seen it the great popularity of the play."—*Brooklyn Times*, June 8th.

"The fame of Denman Thompson's play, 'Old Homestead,' is world-wide. Tens of thousands have enjoyed it, and frequently recall the pure, lively pleasure they took in its representation. This is the story told in narrative form as well as it was told on the stage, and will be a treat to all, whether they have seen the play or not."—*National Tribune*, Washington, D. C.

"Here we have the shaded lanes, the dusty roads, the hilly pastures, the peaked roofs, the school-house, and the familiar faces of dear old Swanzey, and the story which, dramatized, has packed the largest theater in New York, and has been a success everywhere because of its true and sympathetic touches of nature. All the incidents which have held audiences spell-bound are here recorded—the accusation of robbery directed against the innocent boy, his shame, and leaving home; the dear old Aunt Tilda, who has been courted for thirty years by the mendacious Cy Prime, who has never had the courage to propose; the fall of the country boy into the temptations of city life, and his recovery by the good old man who braves the metropolis to find him. The story embodies all that the play tells, and all that it suggests as well."—*Kansas City Journal*, May 27th.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

NO. 1.
A STORY OF POWER AND PATHOS.

THE SENATOR'S BRIDE.

By Mrs. ALEX. McVEIGH MILLER,

Author of "Brunette and Blonde," "Lady Gay's Pride," etc.

This is a domestic story of deep interest, charmingly written, with vigor and earnestness, and has not a dull scene in it. The author's purpose is to portray nature; she therefore avoids all extravagance, and relies entirely upon her ability to entertain her readers with the presentation of scenes and incidents that never surpass probability, yet are extremely captivating.

The story of "THE SENATOR'S BRIDE" is something more than a work of fiction. It contains a moral that is certain to be impressed upon all who follow the career of the wife who wrecked her happiness because she respected herself too much to deceive her husband.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers; or sent, *postage free*, to any address, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 2.
A VIGOROUS DRAMATIC STORY.

A WEDDED WIDOW;
OR,
THE LOVE THAT LIVED.

By **T. W. HANSHEW,**

AUTHOR OF

"Young Mrs. Charnleigh," "Beautiful, but Dangerous," etc.

An admirably told love story, brisk in action, with well drawn characters, and a novel and ingenious plot.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers; or sent, *postage free*, to any address, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 3.
An Entrancing Love Story.

VELLA VERNELL;
OR,
AN AMAZING MARRIAGE.

By Mrs. SUMNER HAYDEN,
Author of "Little Goldie," etc.

In originality of conception, and artistic skill in the construction and development of plot, the story of "VELLA VERNELL" will compare favorably with the most meritorious works of fiction. The language is graceful and forcible; the style is earnest and captivating; the incidents are novel and dramatic—a series of animated pictures, so very life-like that the reader becomes impressed with their reality; the characters are capitally drawn, and speak and act like sentient beings; while the plot is fresh and ingenious, and evolved with the tact of a master-hand.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Issued in clean, large type, with handsome lithographed cover, and for sale by all Booksellers and Newsdealers; or sent, *postage free*, to any address, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. O. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

STREET & SMITH'S SELECT SERIES
OF
POPULAR AMERICAN COPYRIGHT STORIES,
BY POPULAR AUTHORS.

In Handsome Paper Covers, 25 Cents.

No. 4

TWO INTENSELY INTERESTING STORIES.

BONNY JEAN;
OR,
THE CHEST OF GOLD.

By Mrs. E. BURKE COLLINS,

Author of "Sir Philip's Wife," "Married for Gold," etc.

A love story of absorbing interest, artistic in construction, and founded on an entrancing plot.

A SEVERE THREAT.

By Mrs. E. BURKE COLLINS,

Author of "Bonny Jean," "Sir Philip's Wife," etc.

A story exciting in action, brisk in movement, with several highly wrought dramatic scenes.

PRICE, TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

For sale by all Booksellers and News Agents, or will be sent, *postage free*, to any address in the United States or Canada, on receipt of price, by the publishers,

STREET & SMITH,
P. C. Box 2734. 31 Rose St., New York.

“My Soul! I mean that bit of Phosphorus that takes the place.”

JAS. RUSSELL LOWELL.

Crosby's Vitalized Phosphites,

From the Nerve-Giving principles of the
Ox Brain and the embryo of Wheat.

For 20 years has been the standard remedy with Physicians who
treat MENTAL and NERVOUS DISORDERS.

It strengthens the intellect, restores lost
functions, builds up worn out nerves,
promotes digestion, improves the memory,
cures all weaknesses and nervousness.

*It has been used and recommended by Bishops Potter,
Stevens and Robertson; Presidents Mark Hopkins,
Dudley and Hamilton; Professors Parker, Draper and
Beard; by Bismarck and thousands of the world's best
brain-workers.*

“It is a vital nutrient Phosphite, not an inert acid Phosphate.”

“Every one speaks well of VITALIZED Phosphites.”

Christian at Work.

56 W. 25th St., N. Y. For sale by Druggists, or sent by mail, \$1.